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For Contemporary Musicians

down beat

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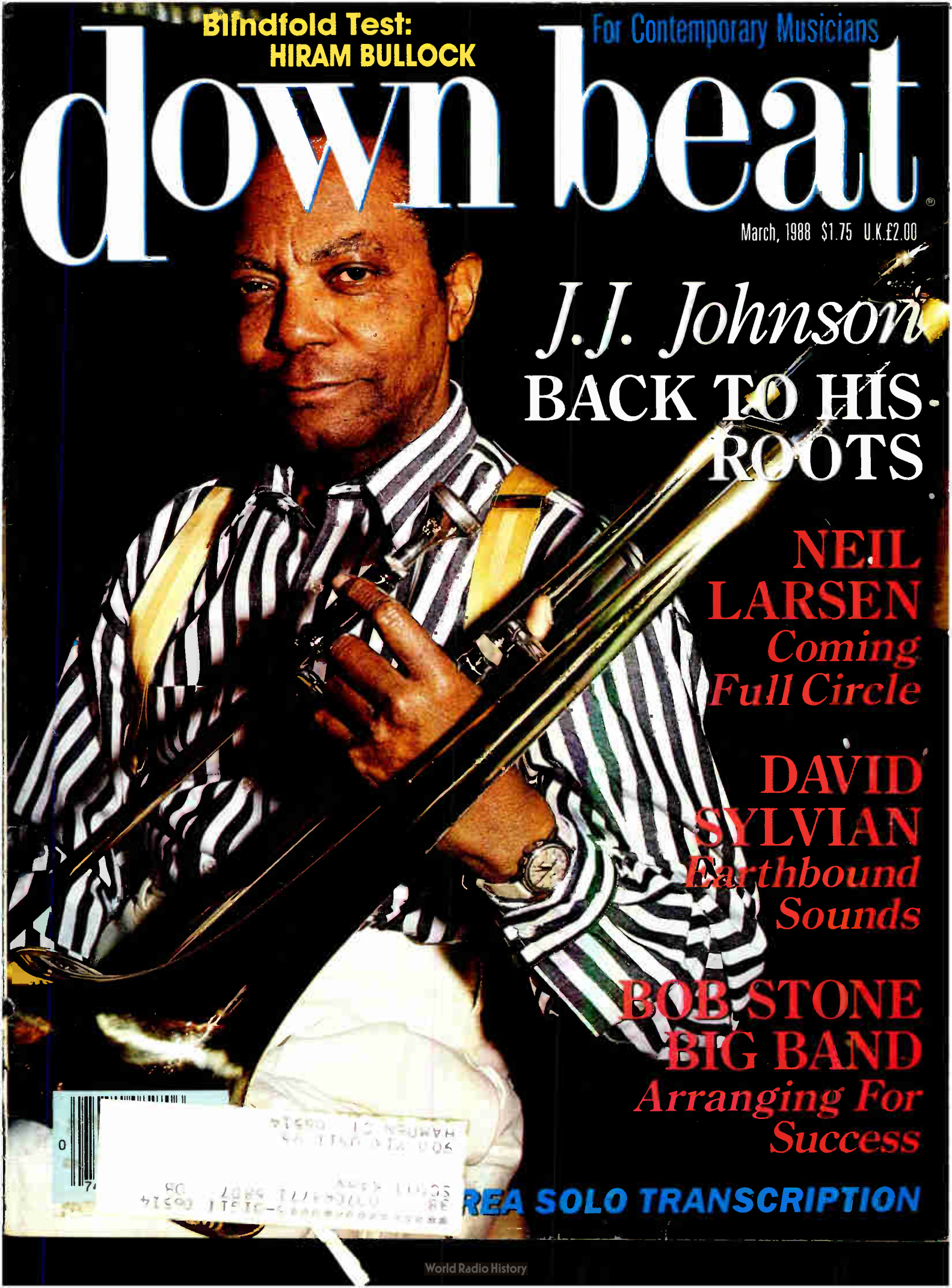

J.J. Johnson
BACK TO HIS ROOTS

NEIL LARSEN
Coming Full Circle

DAVID SYLVIAN
Earthbound Sounds

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Arranging For Success

REA SOLO TRANSCRIPTION

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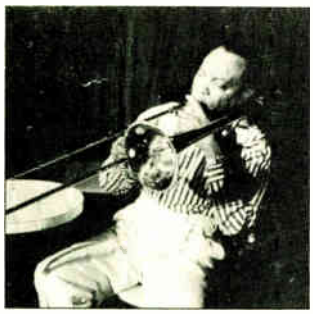

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JAMES F. QUINN

Bob Stone Big Band

YUKA FUJII

David Sylvian

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down beat
For Contemporary Musicians

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THE NEW, THE OLD, AND THE LIVE

by John Ephland

For him it had become a sort of pastime, a variation on stamp collecting or amateur photography. His ongoing search was to discover—or recover—new, old, and ever-more interesting recordings of his favorite musical artists.

Having gone through periods when his record collection could have been used to open another (used) record shop, he had also experienced periods when the only thing he could do was sell, sell, sell. And why? Because it was time to relocate and he couldn't afford to move them, he was short of cash, or the sound of certain recordings/bands bored him or reminded him that *Felix Frankfurter Live At The Hollywood Bowl* would never make it as a collector's item.

For our purposes, his name is Sam (the record man). Ever since the advent of 45s, playlists, Top 40, and new releases, Sam had become fascinated with the packaging of new music, particularly jazz. In fact, one day he woke up and realized he was part of a cult of sorts surrounding/hounding the production, promotion, and preservation of timeless classics—those proven and yet-to-be proven recordings of all manner of musician. Not only did *he* get off on Sun Ra's latest, but a whole coterie did as well. What was going on? Could it be that the excitement of anticipation and discovery was a shared phenomenon? It was around this time that Sam started asking himself if he wasn't turning into a "vinylaholic." "Am I getting carried away?," he asked himself. "What is it that leads me back to those bins just before closing?"

A response came to him in the form of a cassette, a *tape* cassette. Having dabbled with reel-to-reel, Sam was already familiar with audio tape and the excellent sound it could provide within a component stereo system. In brief, he took a good number of records, taped them, and sent them on their merry way—as gifts, as frisbees, for experiments. This reduced the bulk (key word) of his collection and gave him a sense of freedom of mobility he hadn't known since he started loading up on those King recordings of James Brown. In time however, Sam found himself right back on the collector's track—buying new and used records, keeping pace with Sun Ra's latest, again; delighting in reissues, twofers, and an occasional out-of-print gem. And yes, he couldn't resist going ga-ga over the recovery of a much-loved LP he once sold on a foolish whim, or so he now thought.

Sam thanked the record companies from the bottom of his heart, not to mention the record store.

Holding an album *cover*, not to mention the actual record itself, was an aesthetic experience. It somehow added depth of meaning to Sam's participation in the world of music. Especially if he had just seen somebody live and was then presented with a live album that covered the same band at roughly the same time. Another reason to praise the record companies.

Which brings us up to the present. You see, Sam was just getting resettled with records, when the record companies and technology "conspired" to bring music lovers something straight out of *Star Wars*. We are talking, of course, about CDs, compact discs, about a supersonic digital means to a hopefully heightened aesthetic/musical end. Gadgetry was back in full swing. Not since quadraphonic stereo (a contradiction in terms?) had audiophiles been so enamored with lights, knobs, and well . . . toys. Having put the "ends before the means" before, the knobs before the notes, Sam experienced this new phenomenon cautiously, feeling slightly threatened. It reminded him of his first reactions to computers.

But what if CDs *did* improve the sound quality of not only new recordings, but already-made ones as well? After all, wasn't that the whole point? There seemed to be a philosophical question here. The future of turntables, and *records*, not to mention *his* already accumulated storehouse of musical treats was at stake. Was the industry going to desert Sam, and those like him, in its quest for newer and more innovative ways to reproduce sound? There was no question that records skip, warp, and are known to cause fits of rage. But was Sam willing to pay for *more* equipment, not to mention the higher prices for CDs? An unsettling thought of being redundant moved over him: first a turntable, then an 8-track turned-cassette deck, and now a CD player? At this point Sam looked heavenward and asked reflectively, "CD or not CD, is that the question?"

In the midst of all this reproductive reflection, another play on words came to him: is it live or is it a CD? The real issue, and what all this back-and-forth stuff was all about, had to do with hearing, and *seeing* it live versus in a reproduced form. Whether the industry came up with something to surpass even the CD format or not, nothing would ever be able to take the place of hearing, and *seeing*, it live, be it Sun Ra, James Brown, or Sally's sister practicing her scales.

Sam mused, "Now if I could only be sure my favorite shows will be available on CD. . . . "

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chords & discords

BASIC IMPACT

The slow and relatively meager reaction to the death of genius Jaco Pastorius—who revolutionized the role, style, and technique of the electric bass—reminds me of another innovative bassist who has been similarly overlooked. Among bass players, Scott LaFaro is known as one of the greatest musicians ever to play the instrument. His death at the age of 25 put a tragic end to what many consider the most important contributions to bass playing. The virtuoso bass players of today are just catching up with LaFaro, who's dexterity and musicianship created a new role for the bass as a melodic, "lead" instrument. There was a very tasteful obituary in the August 1961 issue of **down beat** that suggested the impact his work would have on the bass. I think it would be interesting to trace that impact on today's players and on jazz as a whole. The bassists will be the first to tell you of his importance.

Steve Robinson
Troy, MI

P.S. Your article on Marcus Miller last year has held me over until now, but now that he's won the Critic's Poll, can we have another? Please?

RE: MR. G'S MUSIC

Regarding the interview of Kenny G (Jan. '88), who is this guy trying to fool? Some of the vague and immature statements he spews forth make me doubt his sanity. No wonder "purists" criticize him. We are looking at mediocre talent combined with an inflated ego. So what if you grew up in an ethnic community? And did I catch you right on your being the only sax player in Seattle at the time who could read music and solo in a soulful style? Right!! Because you were in the right place at the right time is simply a quirk of fate. Thanks a lot for exposing yourself for the fraud you are. And please take a dose of humble pie before you further jam your foot down your throat. Musicians like you give a bad feeling and meaning to jazz, fusion, r&b, etc.

Kelly Rogers, R.N. (Jazz-Fusion player)
Mesa, AZ

WORDS OF CAUTION

Over a year-and-a-half ago, **db** readers were encouraged to express their assessment of the magazine. In reporting the response (June '86), readers were told "Most readers like our blend of jazz and other styles." I was one of those who wrote to compliment "the consistent balance among the features." Since that time, however, the magazine has lost that balance. More features have consistently

CONTINUED ON PAGE 11

YAMAHA UNVEILS NEW R&D FACILITY

NEW YORK—To commemorate its centennial celebration, the Yamaha Corporation of America unveiled its flagship music research and development facility in New York City recently. The state-of-the-art complex, located on the second floor of Metropolitan Tower on West 57th Street near Carnegie Hall, includes four separate R&D rooms devoted to concert grand pianos, band and wind instruments, electronic keyboards, and professional recording equipment.

Julliard musicians giving fanfare.

The new Yamaha Communication Center (YCC) in Manhattan is the fourth such facility in Yamaha's growing empire, which includes R&D centers in Tokyo, London, and Paris. The YCC also includes a street-level musical instrument showroom, showcasing Yamaha's broad line of products.

At the invitation-only YCC facility, Yamaha personnel will conduct full-scale research and development in metallurgy, chemistry, woodcrafting, and electronics while continually monitoring the needs of musicians. By establishing an open dialog with classical pianists, studio pros, and top recording artists in the New York area, Yamaha hopes to inspire fundamental breakthroughs in technology. As President of Yamaha Corporation of America Seiji "Sam" Kajimura said at the gala press conference, "We intend to accomplish this by listening and responding to the needs of music professionals, right in one of the world's grandest and most prestigious music communities. Our guests will evaluate the latest in acoustic and electronic music equipment, including prototypes of new musical instruments. And their evaluations will serve to help us plan next-generation musical instruments while preserving our 100-year history of fine craftsmanship."

The Pro Products Room at YCC features a fully-equipped 32-track digital recording studio packed with Yamaha sound processing devices like the SPX 90II, TX817, and TX 802 tone generators and QX5 digital sequencer. In the Wind and Band Atelier, technicians work with precision metal shaping equipment and special alloys to experiment with Yamaha's full line—from piccolos to tubas to tune parade instruments.

The focus of YCC's Concert Grand Piano R&D room is the company's acclaimed CF-III, a world-class nine-foot grand selected by top European and American concert pianists. YCC's Electronic Keyboard Center showcased the latest developments in Advanced Wave Memory and FM Synthesis technologies, including the Electron, Clavinova, and PortaTone models. The centerpiece here is Yamaha's new HX-1 Electron, a highly sophisticated keyboard capable of creating complex symphonic arrangements. As a demonstration, a single Yamaha keyboard technician performed the full-blown rendition of Tchaikovsky's *1812 Overture*, cannons and all.

At the press conference, Yamaha also unveiled its latest innovation, the Assisted Acoustic (AA) System. This unique technology allows the user to artificially control the sound field of a room, creating different spatial impressions and psychoacoustic ambiances. Using the AA System, a single hall can have a number of different applications, ranging from speeches and lectures to pipe organ recitals and symphonies. By controlling reverberation times and reflection patterns, the AA System can instantly correct the acoustics of a room, simulating a large concert hall environment in a much smaller room or injecting rich reverberation in an acoustically "dead" recording studio. Different desired acoustics are available on different presets with the AA System.

Since beginning production of musical instruments in 1887, Yamaha has built up a solid track record. Today, Yamaha Corporation, Inc. is a $2.7 billion company employing more than 15,000 people around the world, ranking it among the world's largest industrial organizations. "A large percentage of our sales comes from musical instruments that did not even exist five years ago," said Mr. Kajimura. "Five years from now, the same thing will probably hold true. In any case, our goal is the same: to make instruments that enrich people's lives."

In his closing remarks, Mr. Kajimura said of the new flagship facility in New York City, "We promise to strive for further improvement in musical instrument craftsmanship and technology, and to do our part to put an even greater shine on the Big Apple."

—bill milkowski

McDONALD'S ALL-AMERICAN BAND

CHICAGO—Talk about a Herculean task. At McDonald's each year for the past 21, they audition 5-6,000 tapes to pick 104 marching band musicians for the McDonald's All-American High School Band. The week before Thanksgiving two students from each state and the District of Columbia, plus one each from the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico, meet in New York City to be molded into a musical unit by Dr. William Foster of Florida A&M in time for the Macy's Parade and an appearance on the *Today Show*.

In concert at Chicago's Medinah Temple, playing Dr. Foster's colleague Lindsey Sarjeant's arrangements of light classical pieces, Sousa marches, a country-folk medley, some movie themes, and McDonald's jingles for corporate executives and the parents of area band members, the ensemble managed a rather lumbering swing appropriate to the site of Shrine Circus performances as they negotiated the music of the Ellington, Goodman, and Basie bands. Then an all-star six-piece jazz unit stepped forward to display a journeyman's command of *Song For My Father* featuring a hot alto solo by Bruce Winston of Catalina High in Tucson, Arizona and the wispy trumpet playing of Paul Neveu, Deering High, Portland, Maine. Geoffrey Keezer's piano solo was the high point of *Dolphin Dance*. Besides Keezer of Eau Claire, Wisconsin, the other band members were guitarist Scott Denett, South Lakes, Reston, Virginia; bassist Keith Brady, South High, Fargo, North Dakota; and drummer Pete Vagenas of Newark High in Delaware.

The sextet is part of a 23-piece band directed for all but a few months of its eight-year existence by Robert Curnow, director of the Spokane Jazz Orchestra. In between Dr. Foster's rehearsals in New York, Curnow selects the jazz band and rehearses for three or four hours the sextet that will perform in Chicago. While the marching band disbands after the McDonald's Charity Christmas Parade down State Street, the jazz band has a summer tour that ends with the *Jerry Lewis Telethon*, and in years past opened concert dates for Ramsey Lewis, Spyro Gyra, and Maynard Ferguson.

"I try to be understated but this program makes that very hard to do. What McDonald's is doing is primarily for public relations—but what they are doing for the kids is extraordinary. It takes a tremendous amount of money to send a band out for two months. What this does for jazz is inestimable. I don't know where they'd go to play," says Curnow, a veteran of the Stan Kenton Band and Creative World Records.

At one point the entire trumpet section of Buddy Rich's band had been in the McDonald's band. Del Marsalis, Wynton's younger brother, is an alum. Others have gone on to play with the Crusaders, record with Prince, study at Berklee and Juilliard. Last year's band was awarded more than $175,000 in scholarships, including $1,000 from McDonald's itself and $500 from the National Association of Jazz Educators. Yamaha, which provides the band with instruments and sound equipment, awards a wind instrument to the outstanding musician in the band. All this because McDonald's founder Ray Kroc thought musicians ought to be awarded the same recognition given to athletes.

—dave helland

Final Bar

TOM COPI

Warne Marsh

Warne Marsh, tenor saxophonist known for his cool sound, died December 18 at age 60, apparently of a heart attack. Marsh was improvising a chorus of *Out Of Nowhere* at a club in North Hollywood when he "just slipped off his stool" and collapsed, his instrument in hand, according to pianist Ross Tompkins. Marsh had recently returned to the L.A. area from a long stay in New York and was planning to open a club. A few months earlier, he had suffered a heart attack but resumed playing against doctor's orders, according to friends. As a youth, he played with the old Hollywood Canteen Kids and had a radio job backing Hoagy Carmichael. Joining the Army in 1946, Marsh met Lennie Tristano, with whom he studied and played. By 1949, he had recorded with Lee Konitz and Billy Bauer for Capitol Records. He toured and recorded with Tristano and Konitz, and in 1953 was heard as the saxophone soloist on the Metronome All Stars' recording of *How High The Moon*. At the time of his death, he was working on a record with guitarist Ron Eschete and was teaching students in his suburban Sherman Oaks home.

• • •

Clifton Chenier, the King of Zydeco, died December 12 at his home outside Lafayette, Louisiana. Chenier was 62. He started playing accordian in his early 20's, performing as a duo with his brother Cleveland on rubboard. His early music was strongly influenced by traditional French Cajun two-step. Moving to Houston in the '50s, Chenier was then listening to the sounds of r&b, rock & roll, urban blues, and country music. Chenier's return to Louisiana was significant for zydeco music. His eclecticism would change it forever. His Red Hot Louisiana Band represented dance music with unbounced zest; a mix of traditional Cajun instrumentation (with Chenier on accordian and his brother on rubboard) along with electric guitars, saxophones, and Robert Peter St. Judy's strong back beat on drums. The 70's saw Chenier's fame spread beyond the South as he became the ambassador of Louisiana Cajun culture to the world. By 1980, his health began to catch up with him what with his constant touring. He eventually lost one of his feet to diabetes and required kidney dialysis three times a week. He continued to perform, however, having scheduled to play a club in Lafayette on the day he died.

TOM COPI

Clifton Chenier

• • •

Leroy (Slam) Stewart, 73, influential jazz bassist, died December 9 of congestive heart disease in Binghamton, N.Y. Known for his distinctive practice of humming along with his bowed solos, he was one of the first to demonstrate the potential of the bass as a solo

CONTINUED ON PAGE 44

MICHAEL GREGORY

Early in 1983, Michael Gregory Jackson realized he had to make a tough choice. He had already made a name for himself as a promising jazz guitarist, a player and composer whose music on a half-dozen albums combined the energy of the avant garde with bittersweet lyricism. (Lars Gabel, reviewing Jackson's album *Cowboys, Cartoons & Assorted Candy* (Enja 4026) in **db** (May '83), called it "highly accessible" and said Jackson was "one of contemporary music's few genuine poets.")

But Jackson was hearing a different kind of music in his head: songs that were closer to the Motown and psychedelic rock he had played in bands when he was growing up in New Haven, Connecticut. He was ready to change directions, to cross back over into the world of pop music.

There was a problem, though . . . there was this *other* guy named Michael Jackson.

So Michael Gregory Jackson dropped his last name and signed with Island Records as Michael Gregory. For his first album, Island pulled out all the stops, bringing in Nile Rodgers as producer and hiring Steve

Winwood, Tony Thompson, Bernard Edwards, and other name players to back Gregory.

The album, *Situation X* (Island 90110-1), was released with a flourish of publicity—and landed with a thud. "We met with resistance from radio," recalls Gregory. "White radio said it was too black, and black radio said it was too white. The record company just gave up and didn't do anything."

Gregory's latest album, *What To Where* (RCA/Novus 3023), has a bright, contemporary pop sound but avoids the synthetic formulas of Top 40 rock. After years of playing avant garde jazz, Gregory finds clichés hard to swallow. "What I learned when I was working with Leo Smith and Oliver Lake," he says, "was that it was okay to do different things. Even though I'm working with pop structures now, I still want something different. I want to make a chord change go in the opposite direction than everybody's expecting. It's just the way I hear it."

Gregory's new album features lots of his incendiary guitar playing, something *Situation X* didn't do. ("That was a mistake," says Gregory. "I should have played guitar as strongly as I was doing it live.") The songs on *What To Where* were constructed by layering many guitar and keyboard parts, and it's frequently impossible to tell just what instrument it is you're hearing.

"All of the music is based on acoustic guitar," explains Gregory. "I started just playing acoustic guitar and singing, then built up the tracks from there. I used different studio effects with the acoustic guitars, and there's a lot of heavily processed acoustic guitar, plus electric guitar and synthesizer, to add to the textures."

Next up, Gregory says, is a tour to promote the album. "I want to play a *lot*," he emphasizes, "to do some *serious* live shows. I want to get out there and tear it up."

—jim roberts

CLAUDE BOLLING

"It was not made to have any success," said French pianist and composer Claude Bolling of the *Suite For Flute And Jazz Piano* he recorded with classical great Jean-Pierre Rampal in 1975. Though not a classical album—and yet not exactly jazz either—it became an all-time best-seller and stayed on the classical charts more than 10 years—a record record. Though not an improviser, Rampal's lively (and lovely) classical chops were a natural for Bolling's free-spirited music. *Baroque And Blue*, the suite's opening movement, became a regular encore at Rampal's recitals.

Bolling and Rampal became friends when teaching at the International Summer Academy in Nice. "Jean-Pierre liked jazz very much and one day he said he would like to have an experience with jazz musicians. He said to write something for him with a jazz environment. I tried something and he liked it and he said let's record an LP. It was made seriously, in one way, but really for fun. We didn't expect any success."

It wasn't Bolling's first musical success. Born in Cannes in 1930, he was a piano prodigy and was playing professionally at 15. He first recorded with a band of his own at 18. While a classical student early on—with Maurice Duruflé and André Hodeir as teachers—his great musical *amour* was jazz. "I was 11 or 12 when I heard the music on the radio, French pianists playing medleys of the hits that were popular at that time. I was attracted to it. It was like jazz but someone said it's not truly jazz. I should hear Fats Waller." And along with Fats Waller, soon Bolling was listening to Earl Hines, Willie "The Lion" Smith, and especially Duke Ellington, his greatest inspiration and eventually his friend. "The first time I heard the music of Duke Ellington, it was as if some magic was actually happening," Bolling writes on the jacket of Volume One of *Bolling Plays Ellington* (CBS 42474), a remarkable new re-creation, faithful in both sound and spirit, of Ellingtonia.

During the post-war years in Paris, Bolling became a regular around the jazz scene as so many American musicians came through and even settled in Europe. Among those Bolling worked and recorded with were Sidney Bechet, Don Byas, Buck Clayton, Bill Coleman, Lionel Hampton, Kenny Clarke, and many of the Ellingtonians.

Altogether he's recorded eight classical/jazz suites: one each with violinist Pinchas Zuckerman, trumpeter Maurice André, and cellist Yo-Yo Ma, also a suite for guitarist Alexandre Lagoya, the *Picnic Suite* for Lagoya and Rampal together, and a suite for piano trio with the English Chamber Orchestra conducted by Rampal. "Each time it was a commitment of these musicians. They came to me. Rampal told me I should do something for Pinky, and Pinky called me.

It was also an idea of Jean-Pierre for me to write for [cellist Mistislav] Rostropovich. Rostropovich liked it but didn't feel he was right for this kind of dialogue and said to do it with Yo-Yo."

He's now recorded the *Suite For Flute and Jazz Piano #2* (CBS 42318). "Rampal said 'I'm tired of playing *Baroque And Blue* for an encore. I need a new suite. I said no, because everyone would say it's not like the first one, but finally I did it." Just as classically jazzy (or is it jazzily classical?) as the first one, *Suite #2* should be as popular—though it'll be 10 years before Rampal and Bolling know they've created as great a success.

—michael bourne

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J.J. Johnson

Bringing It All Back Home

By Gene Kalbacher

It's better to burn out than to fade away . . . . James Louis Johnson, better known as J.J., bebop's premier trombonist, was familiar with this romantic-but-deadly notion long before Neil Young invoked it as a mythopoeic maxim for rock & rollers with dissolute dreams of immortality through infamy. A number of Johnson's peers during bop's heyday in the '40s and '50s *did* burn out, but the trombonist never bought it. Instead, he wrought a smooth, fluidly frantic trombone diction comparable to, and compatible with, the saxophone and trumpet syntax invented by Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie.

Born in Indianapolis, Indiana, in 1924, Johnson, like many of his contemporaries in the formative fray of small-combo bop, cut his teeth in big bands. Following a 1942 stint in Snookum Russell's territory band, the trombonist spent three productive years with Benny Carter before moving on to Count Basie's band. Johnson's stay with Basie, however, was short-lived, because the trombonist was drawn into, and inspired by, the musical maelstrom of Parker and Gillespie. Besides performing and recording with them, Johnson made lasting statements with the likes of Bud Powell, Sonny Stitt, Miles Davis, Clifford Brown, Sonny Rollins, and Illinois Jacquet.

Though he forged a new stylistic standard for the trombone and achieved success, both popular and critical, he dropped out of the jazz scene periodically (owing to artistic or economic discontent, or both), the first time from 1952-54, when he found work as a blueprint inspector. Yet Johnson emerged from this hiatus with a healthy creative agenda and renewed vitality, as witnessed by his partnership with fellow trombonist Kai Winding, with whom he performed frequently as Jay and Kai, and cut many still-cherished sides from 1954-56. During the late '50s and '60s Johnson led his own, New York-based bands, large and small, and further honed his composing and arranging skills; his compositions *Lament, Kelo, Enigma,* and *Wee Dot,* along with the extended work *El Camino Real,* are still favored by jazz musicians.

In 1970, at the suggestion of Quincy Jones, Johnson moved to California and concentrated on writing for movies and television. His film credits include Bill Cosby's *Man And Boy,* and several so-called blacksploitation pictures (*Cleopatra Jones* and *Top Of The Heap*); for tv he has worked on episodes of *The Mod Squad, Starsky & Hutch,* and *The Six Million Dollar Man.* Although he recorded several albums earlier in this decade for Pablo (with Joe Pass, Al Grey, Milt Jackson, and Ray Brown), Johnson has remained virtually inactive as a jazz performer, save for a 1977 quintet tour of Japan and a '84 sextet trip to Europe.

This past fall, Johnson announced that he had formed a new quintet (Cedar Walton, piano; Rufus Reid, bass; Victor Lewis, drums; Tom Gullion, tenor sax), was hitting the road, and was itching to record again. The month-long tour culminated with an engagement at the Village Vanguard in New York City, marking the trombonist's first week-long bash in the Big Apple since he led his own band at the long-defunct Birdland nearly three decades ago. Pianist Walton, whose association with Johnson dates back to the late '50s, remarked, "Rarely have I seen a musician so *raring* to perform;" a condition reinforced by Robert Palmer's review of a Vanguard set in *The New York Times*: "One expects mastery of the trombone from Mr. Johnson, and one is not disappointed."

GENE KALBACHER: *Your return to the performance scene is major news to straightahead jazz fans.*

J.J. JOHNSON: *Straightahead jazz fans*? An endangered species, to be sure [*laughs*]. There are such people still remaining on this planet.

GK: *The obvious question: why mount a comeback at the age of 63?*

JJ: In a word, my career as a jazz musician has been *cyclical.* And for all I know, there's nothing unique about that. It has had its peaks and valleys, its moments when things were a little fuzzy. There were times when I stepped outside the jazz arena just to take a look at it, from the outside looking in. There were times when I stepped outside to re-evaluate and to take stock or take inventory of what I'm all about—what I'm all about as it relates to what jazz is all about.

GK: *How would you describe the cycle since coming to Hollywood and working on film and television scoring?*

JJ: For most of that time—except for a few tours—I had playing on the back burner and writing on the front burner. At the moment, I'm reversing that. Let's just say I began to get a powerful hankering to play again. [*laughs*] I'm using country & western street talk. There's jazz street talk, all kinds of street talk. *Powerful hankerin'.* Do you remember a show Anthony Newley did some years ago with the wonderful title, *The Roar Of The Greasepaint, The Smell Of The Crowd?* That says it all!

GK: *You've dropped out, for want of a better word, from the jazz performance scene several times during your career. Can you recall the reason or reasons behind these withdrawals? Was it economics? Dissatisfaction with the scene?*

JJ: It was sometimes a mixture of everything you mentioned, sometimes just one of the items. Again, I don't think that's terribly unique.

GK: *Having performed so infrequently since coming to L.A. in 1970, notwithstanding the tours you did abroad in '77 and '84, has it been difficult for you to get your trombone chops back?*

JJ: I try not to let my chops get too far out of hand. All those years when I was film composing and whatnot, the trombone was always close by, beckoning me to pick it up and play a few notes on it, sometimes more than a few notes. I never really stopped playing completely. I'm a guy who practices anyway. I practiced a lot, and I did some minimal studio gigs, playing trombone in the band on dramatic scores.

GK: *In the liner notes to* Four Trombones . . . The Debut Recordings, *Leonard Feather cites a statement you once made about your early experience with the trombone: "There's an innate clumsiness about it; it's a beastly, horrid instrument to play, and particularly to play jazz on. Many times I wondered, how and why did I ever pick up this horrid instrument?" Although you say your chops never got too rusty during your "Hollywood film-composer syndrome," practice chops are one thing and gig chops are another.*

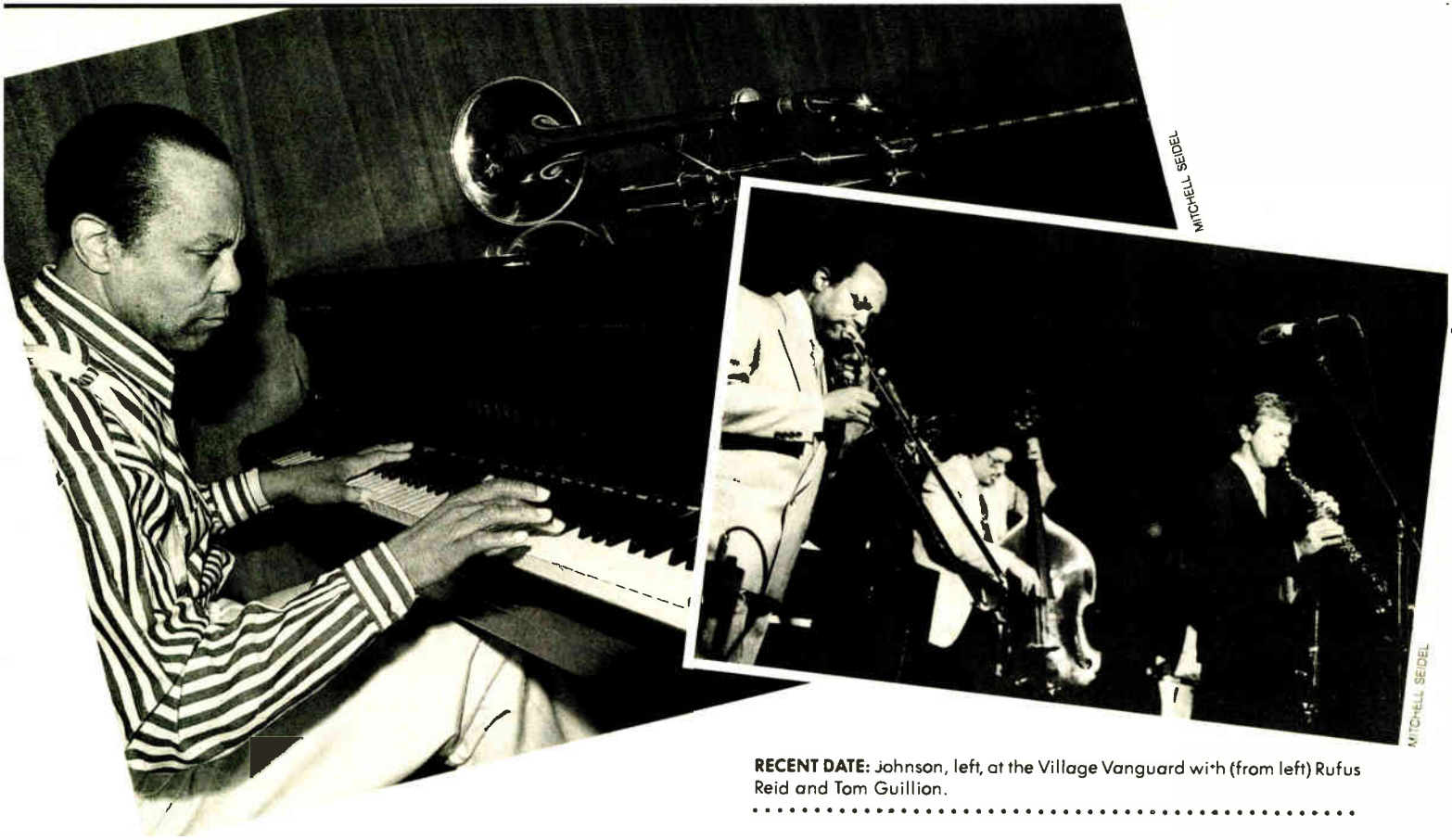
JJ: First of all, don't you dare call that beastly hard instrument a *beastly hard instrument*—because it *is* a beastly hard instrument! [*laughs*] No, I'm kidding. It's just a bit more difficult than other instruments once you get the hang of it. The awkwardness of the trombone as well as its ungainliness in that it doesn't have keys and valves—you put that in your subconscious. For all the pros, you never lose sight of it, but you refuse to let it intimidate you. You function as a guy with a trumpet or a saxophone does, and you go on from there. Obviously, you can't do all the things that a saxophonist or trumpet player can do, but I've gotta tell you, this current, new crop of trombonists is gaining and breathing hard on the guys with the trumpets and saxophones. The trombonists are playing faster faster and faster, higher and higher and higher. There will come a time, I predict, when you'll have to discard the idea that the trombone is an awkward, ungainly, difficult instrument to play because of the slide. It's getting less and less that way.

GK: *Although you've gigged so little in recent years, you mentioned that you did listen quite a bit to records and jazz radio and attend jazz concerts. Who are some of the young trombonists who've impressed you?*

JJ: The most articulate performance I've *ever* heard on the trombone was given at Wolf Trap by Slide Hampton, when he played on a set with Dizzy Gillespie. It was a tribute to Dizzy, and I believe it will be shown on public television. Slide played *Oop-Pop-A-Da* at about 100 miles per hour with about 100 choruses. I'm exaggerating, of course, but he played all over the horn, with great virtuosity. Also, I'd be remiss if I didn't credit Slide for recommending [agent] Mary Ann Topper to me.

But who are the younger, fresher faces behind the trombone?

JJ: Steve Turre sent me some tapes, and he's awfully, awfully good. There are some trombones around now who are doing a number. Bill Watrous. I hear tell about Craig Harris, and I've heard some nice stuff from Robin Eubanks.



RECENT DATE: Johnson, left, at the Village Vanguard with (from left) Rufus Reid and Tom Guillion.

GK: *Let's turn back the clock and recall the young, fresh-faced J.J. Johnson. Beginning in 1942, you spent three years in Benny Carter's band. How much did you, then 18, learn from this future Hall of Famer about composing, arranging, improvising?*

JJ: A *lot*! A lot. First of all, it was an education just to *be* there as a sideman in Benny's band and to witness this giant of a musician—to observe him as a man, as a musician, as a saxophonist, as a composer, as an arranger. It was invaluable. He was a *stylist*—as Lester Young was a stylist, as Miles Davis is a stylist, as Dizzy Gillespie is a stylist, as Coleman Hawkins . . . . After one bar of his improvisation, you knew immediately it was Benny Carter. No one sounds like Benny Carter, no one.

GK: *One can say the same thing about J.J. Johnson. No trombonist in the '40s and, arguably, no one since then, has been able to top or equal that very fragile, fast, legato style you pioneered. Who were your influences in terms of sound and tone and textures? I hear Lester Young, but that may be presumptuous on my part.*

JJ: That's not presumptuous at all. Lester Young was a primary influence in my early years; I was a big Lester Young-aholic. There was a trombonist that not many people know about named Fred Beckett, who played with Harlan Leonard's Rockets, a Midwestern territory orchestra. They never made the big time, but Fred Beckett was the first trombonist I ever heard who played in a linear, or lyrical, style. They made one or two recordings in the early-to-mid '40s. He ended up, before he passed away, with Lionel Hampton. There are other guys. I was a very big Trummy Young fan. Trummy, again, was a stylist. I was somehow impressed by the stylists. Dick Wells, a stylist—not a lot of notes, not a lot of virtuosic situations, but pure stylistic trombone. Vic Dickenson was a wonderful jazz performer who left his mark. And Roy Eldridge. Naturally, when I first heard Diz and Bird, I knew that's where it was going to be, and, sure enough, that's where it went.

GK: *Working with Bird and Diz in the late '40s, were you aware that you were creating, in effect, a new jazz language with new syntax and vocabulary?*

JJ: I don't know how conscious we were or not. It was very controversial, it was new. The evolution of jazz is so. It has to be that way. Coltrane was controversial. Mingus was controversial. Oscar Pettiford was controversial. You're gonna have these cycles in jazz. Jazz is *restless*. It won't stay put, and it never will, and *thank God* that it never has and never will. It's forever seeking and reaching out and exploring. I don't put down this so-called fusion, these guys who are heavily into electronics, because they, too, are reaching out and searching and trying to expand the frontiers, if you will, of jazz. The same criticism, the same hue and cry, about fusion and electronic music occurred when Dizzy and Bird launched their new style of jazz.

GK: *There are, however, new variables today with the burgeoning of technology. With all the synthesizers and drum computers out there, there are fewer work opportunities for straightahead jazz musicians. Just look at film scores today.*

JJ: I couldn't agree more. The studio musicians in Hollywood are all running scared. It's frightening that their workload is getting less because of synthesizers and synthesizers and synthesizers. Guys are doing film scores with four or five synthesizers—where the score ends up sounding like 40 musicians or 80 musicians.

GK: *What stands out most in your memory about working with Bird, particularly the December 1947 sextet date you did for Dial?*

JJ: I don't remember any particular anecdotes; it's so fuzzy.

GK: *What was it like to be standing alongside Bird, when he was soaring and swooping through his amazing solos?*

JJ: Well, I think the archives will bear me out that I didn't work a lot with Bird. On a few, isolated recording situations I happened to be fortunate enough to be involved with Bird or Dizzy.

GK: *Then again, how many times do you have to be in the on-deck circle next to Babe Ruth to remember the experience? How did it feel, listening to Bird laying into a solo and knowing you were next up?*

JJ: Well, your knees shake a lot [*laughs*], they bump up against each other. Let's not forget that by the time I got on the scene, Diz and Bird had already made their mark. I wasn't involved at the beginning. I recall, in fact, that the first time I heard Diz and Bird I was with Basie's band, and we happened to be playing in New York at

the Roxy or something. I had a chance to go around to these clubs on 52nd Street and hear them. Obviously, it was a *shattering* experience to hear this revolutionary new music.

GK: *One month before your Dial date with Bird, you cut a session with saxist Sonny Stitt [Sonny Stitt/Bud Powell/J.J. Johnson], at which three of your tunes were recorded—Elora, Blue Mode, and Tea Pot. Stitt, many feel, was unfairly stigmatized, and ultimately driven to the tenor from the alto, for sounding too much like Bird. Do you feel that Stitt was unduly castigated for what may have been merely a coincidence in conception?*

JJ: There were times when Stitt sounded so much like Bird that one had to wonder. Yet, there was a subtle difference. Yes, it was controversial: "Is this the ultimate Bird clone?" There were so many Bird clones, but: "Is he the super-Bird clone?" There was a Sonny Stitt in there that was uniquely Sonny Stitt; it was Bird but it was Sonny Stitt.

GK: *There were indeed many Bird clones, just as a decade or so later there were many Trane clones. During the '40s, many musicians believed that in order to play like Bird, one had to live like Bird—to indulge one's appetite for sex, drink, drugs. How did you manage to avoid these temptations and traps of the scene?*

JJ: Someone, in an interview, asked Benny Carter the secret of his longevity. He gave a simple, eloquent statement: "I am a survivor." I can say the same about myself. I survived the scene you depicted, and I have survived the cyclical ups and downs of a jazz musician's life.

GK: *In Ira Gitler's book* Jazz Masters Of The Forties, *in which you are the highlight of the trombone chapter, he quotes you as saying that your previous approach to leading a band was "too rigid, too meticulous, too mechanical." If indeed that was so, how do you foresee leading your new quintet after having been inactive for so long?*

JJ: I'll just try to be much looser, take more chances, be more adventurous. Just hang loose and let if flow. That's street talk, too, but that characterizes what I hope to accomplish with this quintet.

GK: *Pianist Cedar Walton, a member of the group that recorded J.J. Inc. with you in 1960, seems to be a pivotal member of your new enterprise.*

JJ: Cedar is one of my all-time favorite pianists. I was thrilled that when Mary Ann Topper and I started putting this whole thing together, we both agreed that we should have Cedar as our key guy as far as putting the rest of the band together. Cedar and Mary Ann put the rest of the band together, except for the saxophonist, who was recommended very highly by my dear friend David Baker—one of America's foremost jazz educators at Indiana University.

GK: *How is the quintet's repertoire shaping up?*

JJ: For this group I've written two original compositions and rearranged a few others. I've rearranged *Copping The Bop*, which I did many, many years ago on my first recording session, and Wayne Shorter's *Nefertiti*. It's a little different from the one people know from Miles. One of the new ones, *Quintergy*, is a play on the two words *quintet* and *energy*. It's a very high-voltage piece that kind of goes crazy. *Why Indianapolis, Why Not Indianapolis?* is another new composition.

GK: *Besides returning to the performance scene, you are also returning to your hometown of Indianapolis, Indiana. What precipitated the move?*

JJ: How much *more* can you come back? [*laughs*] My wife, Vivian, and I lived in New York for a number of years, and we loved every minute of it. I still think New York City is one of the great cities of the world. But there came a point in time when we felt the need for a dramatic change in our lives. That happened in 1970, when we moved to Los Angeles. Los Angeles is a wonderful city. A lot of people have complaints and gags about L.A., but I have none. But, again, my wife and I both felt the need for a significant change. The logical choice, having lived in both New York and Los Angeles, was to move back to our roots. My father and mother still live in Indianapolis. My wife and I were both born there, and we went through high school together there. Even though Thomas Wolfe said, "You can't go back home," we're gonna ingore his comment. **db**

MITCHELL SEIDEL

J.J. JOHNSON'S EQUIPMENT

J.J. Johnson switched to Yamaha about nine months ago, though he still employs a King M21 mouthpiece. "I played the King 2B, 3B, a configuration with a 2B slide and a 3B bell with a special adaptor, and a 3B slide with a 4B bell." This past year the trombonist became involved in what he calls "the leader-pipe syndrome." Explains Johnson: "The leader-pipe is a length of tubing, about eight inches long, that goes down into the first part of the slide, where you put your mouthpiece. When you insert the mouthpiece into the trombone, you're really inserting it into the leader-pipe." Having heard that Yamaha makes a trombone with three interchangeable leader-pipes, Johnson contacted Yamaha's band and orchestral marketing manager Jack Faas, "and I've been playing them ever since." The No. 1 leader-pipe, he points out, offers a Bach-like response and timbre; No. 2, traditional Yamaha response and timbre; No. 3 King-like response and timbre. Johnson will work as a Yamaha clinician this year.

J.J. JOHNSON SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

as a leader

JACKSON, JOHNSON, BROWN & COMPANY—Pablo 2310-897
CONCEPTS IN BLUE—Pablo 2312-123
THE YOKOHAMA CONCERT—Pablo 2620-109
WE'LL BE TOGETHER AGAIN—Pablo 2310-91
THINGS ARE GETTING BETTER ALL THE TIME—Pablo 2312-141
PINNACLES—Milestone 9093
J.J. JOHNSON AND HIS BIG BANDS: SAY WHEN—RCA CD 6277-2-RB
PROOF POSITIVE—Impulse 68
A TOUCH OF SATIN—Columbia CL-1737
J.J. INC.—Columbia CL-1606
J.J. IN PERSON!—Columbia CL-1161
STAN GETZ AND J.J. AT THE OPERA HOUSE—Verve CD 831 272-2
BLUE TROMBONE—Columbia 8109
DIAL J.J. 5—Columbia CL-1084
J IS FOR JAZZ—Columbia CL-935
THE EMINENT JAY JAY JOHNSON, VOLS. 1 & 2—Blue Note 1505/ 1506
MAD BEBOP—Savoy SJL-2232

with Jay & Kai

JAY & KAI + 6—Columbia 37001
LOOKING BACK—Prestige 7253
KAI AND J.J.—Bethlehem 6001

with Dizzy Gillespie

PERCEPTIONS—Verve 8411

with Sonny Rollins

SONNY ROLLINS, VOL. 2—Blue Note 8158B

with Miles Davis

MILES DAVIS, VOLS. 1 & 2—Blue Note 81501/ 81502
WALKIN'—Prestige OJC-213
THE COMPLETE BIRTH OF THE COOL—Capitol 16168

with Charlie Parker

THE VERY BEST OF BIRD—Warner Bros. 2WB-3198

with Sonny Stitt

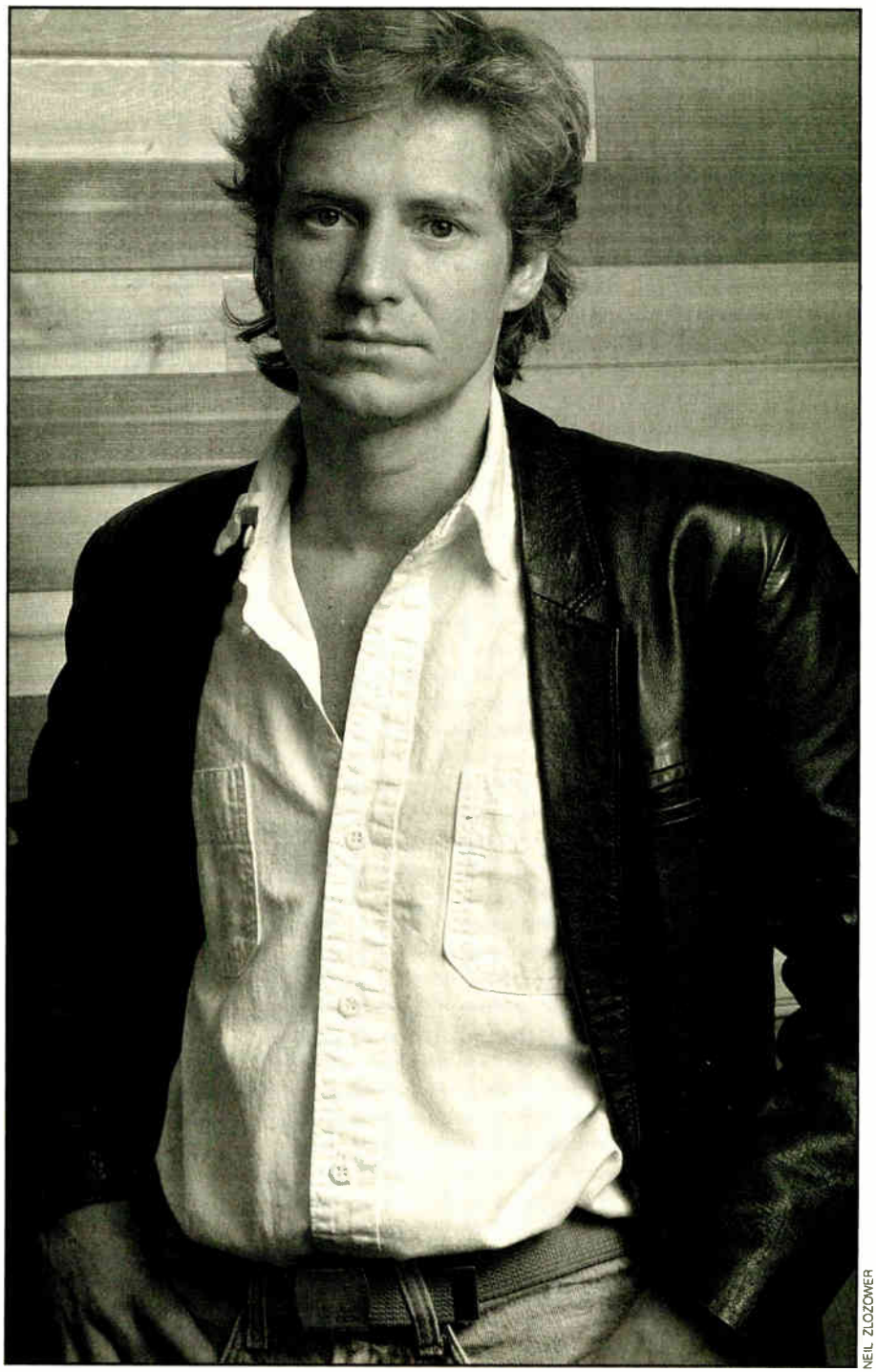
SONNY STITT/J.J. JOHNSON/BUD POWELL—Prestige OJC-009

with Kai Winding/Bennie Green/ Willie Dennis

FOUR TROMBONES—THE DEBUT RECORDINGS—Prestige 24097

neil larsen
COMING FULL CIRCLE

By Scott Yanow



NEIL ZLOZOWER

The talented keyboardist/composer/producer Neil Larsen has spent a large part of his career contributing to the music of other artists in fields as diverse as rock, pop, funk, jazz, and even folk. Until his recent MCA debut *Through Any Window*, Larsen had a lower profile among the musically aware public than one might expect. "After the *Full Moon* album several years ago I just wasn't sure what direction I wanted to go in. When I did my first album *Jungle Fever* I had had years of tunes saved up that I could pick from, a great luxury. Without any real direction staring at me, I continued doing sessions for others and saved up tunes until I was ready."

The eventual result, *Through Any Window*, fits into the much-maligned and misunderstood genre of fusion, mixing together rock rhythms, pop melodies, and jazz improvisation. Larsen, although not wishing to be typecast, agrees: "I prefer the distinction that they have in Japan where fusion is a different category than jazz and rock. I guess I fall into that idiom.

"It took a couple of months to record *Through Any Window*," Larsen recalls, "from the first day in the studio to the final mastering. I've been working with Al Jarreau and we had a lot of time off during the tour. I cut down a lot on the recording time by bringing some equipment on the road and working on the tunes in hotel rooms so I didn't have to spend much time searching for grooves or synthesizer sounds in the studios."

Larsen's newest album is full of upbeat melodies, danceable rhythms, and top-notch musicianship. "I generally like my most recent tunes the best. *Tonar* is one of my favorites. *Carnaval* is a bit different for I wrote it away from the piano, putting it together in my head before I ever played it. I actually wrote it for Miles Davis whom

I met through Tommy LiPuma. They were looking for tunes for the *Tutu* album. He's been playing it live as a percussion piece, although it hasn't ended up on any of his albums yet."

The eclectic keyboardist began his musical career early. A native of Cleveland, Larsen began playing piano at nine, shortly after his family moved to Sarasota, Florida. "My dad, who plays the banjo and the organ, liked the Andrews Sisters, so that's the first music I remember hearing. I started on bass. There was a radio show broadcast from a local community house and kids were encouraged to put bands together for the shows. My brother formed a group called the Junior Rockets—since there was an older group called the Rockets—and we played cover versions of pop hits and Elvis Presley songs. I was a big star in the sixth grade because I was on the air Saturday afternoons, jamming on the radio.

"At 11 or 12 the piano seemed to be more fun to practice alone than bass, so I switched. I started writing as soon as I started playing. Recently I found an old songbook that included the first song I ever wrote, *Spider Web Waltz*. It wasn't much different in style than what I write now—I don't know if it means that I haven't come a long way or that I found my style early."

Larsen was to a large extent self-taught but one teacher, Dick Hamilton, made a big impression on him. "I was 13 and he could see that I had talent, not so much in reading music as in writing it. My lesson sometimes would be to take a standard from a fake book, learn all the changes, and come up with new substitutions. After awhile my homework would be to write a new song and explain to him how it worked. Right before he went into the Navy he really showed me how I could teach myself after he was gone so I wouldn't have to search for a new teacher. At this time, **down beat** became very special to me because growing up in Sarasota it was the only way to stay in touch with jazz. I wouldn't have known anything about jazz if it hadn't been for **down beat**."

Throughout high school the young pianist appeared in local clubs nightly, rarely getting more than a few hours sleep. "At 13 I made the decision to be a musician. My big influences back then in jazz were Miles Davis' *Sketches Of Spain* and *Kind Of Blue*. John Coltrane's *My Favorite Things*, and all of the Cannonball Adderley records on Riverside with Bobby Timmons, Joe Zawinul, and Victor Feldman.

"I played in many different bands. Almost always I was in a jazz group at the same time as a rock band so I constantly had the exposure of those two forms of music. I played in bars all throughout high school even though I wasn't supposed to. Usually it was five sets from 9-2, six nights a week in clubs, lounges, and casual gigs. I was playing with some very good musicians and made the most of it, experimenting all night long with new chord changes and substitutions."

After high school Larsen continued playing in Sarasota, got married, had a son he named Miles, and then got divorced. "I was drafted in 1969 right after the divorce. I went through infantry training and was sent to Vietnam. Through an incredible stroke of luck I met a captain in the Special Services who was a Coltrane fanatic. That was all I listened to at the time, so I played *My Favorite Things* for him on the piano. Immediately he put me in a band for the rest of the last year I was overseas. I was actually in charge of this group that toured the country playing for soldiers. We played everywhere from hospitals and air bases to landing zones and even in Cambodia, performing versions of hits from groups such as Chicago and Blood, Sweat and Tears. I tried to have as many players as possible, to get these guys out of the field, so we had a lot of horns. Once in awhile the Vietcong could hear us and if they had lobbed a rocket or mortar accurately they could have been lucky. A couple times as soon as we started playing they would start shooting. That's a little different from

ROD MILLINGTON

the L.A. music scene, where maybe we'll get a bottle thrown at us."

After his year in Vietnam, Neil Larsen returned to civilian life. A couple of his friends suggested he try New York. "I went up there for a two-week vacation and never returned to Florida. I met Buzzy Feiten the first day I was there. He was in a band that needed a keyboard player. That's how it started."

Guitarist Feiten was then part of a pop/funk unit called Bang. "We lived in Woodstock," recalls Larsen "and did an album that never came out. Nothing really happened but it was fun anyway. A lot of musicians who lived in Woodstock used to come down to hear us because it was the only bar in town. David Sanborn used to sit in. It was around 1971 and Woodstock, a little town that still probably doesn't have a traffic light, was populated by artists and musicians. It made for a great environment."

Shortly after joining Bang, Larsen became heavily involved with studiowork through Bang's bassist Tom Dawes, who produced commercials and records. The studio connection lasted longer than Bang. "Buzzy and I decided after awhile that we had a different musical direction than the other members of Bang, which was a pop-oriented group. We wanted to be a little more adventurous and stretch out, so we regrouped as Full Moon in 1972, doing a record. We lasted two years, playing a couple of tours, gigging in Woodstock. We briefly had Steve Gadd and Dave Holland in our group but we weren't very well organized. That's when I realized that we had to respect the business end, not act like we're only musicians and have someone else take care of that aspect. We ultimately weren't a successful band because of lack of direction.

After Full Moon ran its course, Larsen began to get disillusioned with the many anonymous studio jobs. "I realized that that was not really what I wanted to do with my life. You get to do a few fun things but much of studiowork involves just going through the motions. I would see veteran musicians who were not particularly happy doing jingles everyday, 9-5. Luckily I hooked up with Gregg Allman in '75. I'd known him from my days in Florida. The Allman Brothers Band had just broken up and I started playing with him regularly. We toured Japan and Europe and in '77 came out to L.A. to do a record. At that point I moved here. In a real stroke of luck the producers of Gregg's album took an interest in me, especially after I gave them a tape of a few songs I'd recorded in my living room. They gave it to Tommy LiPuma and through him I got established very quickly in L.A."

With A&M/Horizon Larsen recorded his first two solo albums *Jungle Fever* (which received a Grammy nomination) and *High Gear*, both solid fusion efforts. "Listening to them now I think that I could have spent more time on the arrangements. I still like the material although, technologically, things have advanced quite a bit since then. I always liked *From A Dream* and *High Gear* from those early dates. I just wish I could have found more time to spend with those projects."

When Tommy LiPuma moved to Warner Brothers, Larsen eventually followed. He co-led the *Larsen-Feiten Band* record with his longtime cohort Feiten and they collaborated on an album named after their old group *Full Moon*. "When I think of Buzzy, it's the excitement he achieves by building up his solos. When we play live he takes his solo to a certain level, and then to a higher level. Just when you think he's going to cool it down he has a couple more levels still to come. It's really a thrill to hear him play."

Through the years Neil Larsen has participated on a wide variety of sessions including dates led by the likes of George Harrison, Rickie Lee Jones, Jimmy Cliff, the Mighty Clouds of Joy, Dr. John, Kenny Loggins, David Sanborn, Cher, and Paul Anka, among others.

Is it really that enjoyable to partly submerge one's personality so as to fit in with a stylist from a different area of music? "Yes, it's fun to get on a really good album and work on it everyday. Making a couple of albums with George Harrison was a real thrill; to get a chance to help him create music. If I show up early at a record date it's because I can't wait to play. On the other hand, there were times in New York where I was hired to record with folk artists. I often felt that they could get anyone to fill my role, pay them less and get just as good music. Sometimes it's just not my type of music or not demanding enough. In contrast, I enjoy touring with rock groups. Playing with people like Kenny Loggins and Rick Springfield has made me aware of technological advances. It really opens up one's ears, experimenting with different synthesizers."

Since 1986, Larsen has been closely associated with Al Jarreau as music director and keyboardist. "Al and I have had the same manager since 1979 and I'd worked with him a few previous times, including a live recording in Montreux. When they offered me the gig I saw his itinerary, playing in Naples, Monte Carlo, Nice, the whole Riviera tour. I just had to sign up.

"As a musical director for Al I don't have to do that much. I help a little with auditions and maybe tell people when the breaks are over. Al is such a musical guy but he doesn't play an instrument, so he relays to me what he wants and I'll figure out what notes he needs. He really doesn't need much help so I mostly just play.

"We performed in the greatest places in Europe, these amazing theatres, and we did a show right on the beach. Al Jarreau is great to work with; he always emphasizes music over business. There is a lot of freedom in interpreting his tunes. Live, he is very spontaneous with a lot of scatting between tunes. He can go off on a 10-minute excursion or be counting off the next tune, so I have to watch him closely. He can do incredible imitations of instruments. What he's playing, the lines he's singing, are so original."

Now that *Through Any Window* puts the spotlight back on Neil Larsen, the keyboardist is already planning his next album. "I want to use more horns [both live and synth], which I think will change my sound a bit. I'm hoping first to put a band together to play around L.A. It would include Buzzy, Lenny Castro, and a horn section. Then if the opportunity comes up to play on the road I won't have to start from scratch."

When asked if he might someday return to his roots and record standards from the '50s and '60s, Larsen responds, "I don't see myself recording standards. I may be using material from other people on my next album and I might possibly record an acoustic album if I have the right material for it. But I wouldn't touch the tunes Coltrane and Miles recorded. They have already been done, perfectly."

As for future directions and goals, Larsen is quite optimistic. "From doing a lot of sessions with a variety of people I've evolved into working on three diverse projects, each of which are equally fun. I'm working on a new album, will be going on another long tour with Al Jarreau, and I've been involved in a new band with Hamish Stewart, the former singer with the Average White Band. The music is quite funky and includes Anthony Jackson, the great bass player.

"I hope to work even more on focusing in on my writing, forming a stronger musical personality. I consider myself very fortunate to be able to make my living from music and to get so many different opportunities to make my own musical statements." **db**

NEIL LARSEN'S EQUIPMENT

"I've always played electric keyboards. From the start, in addition to a standard piano, I added the Wurlitzer piano, a Fender Rhodes, a Hammond M3 in 1968 that I still play, and then all the synthesizers, including the Moog, a Prophet, and the DX. Want to buy some old equipment?"

Larsen tries to use the same equipment live as he does in the studio: an emulator, a rack of DX7's, a DX72, a Roland DSO, and a Roland PPG, along with a variety of Junos and Jupiters. Of the newer acoustic pianos he prefers Yamahas.

NEIL LARSEN SELECT DISCOGRAPHY

as a leader

THROUGH ANY WINDOW—MCA 42018
HIGH GEAR—A&M/Horizon 738
JUNGLE FEVER—A&M/Horizon 733

with Buzzy Feiten

FULL MOON—Warner Bros. 3585
THE LARSEN-FEITEN BAND—Warner Bros. 3468

with George Harrison

SOMEWHERE IN ENGLAND—Dark Horse 3492
GEORGE HARRISON—Dark Horse 3255

JAMES F. QUINN

Arranging For Success

THE BOB STONE BIG BAND

By Robert Wolf

What chance does a big band have to make a national name for itself? Even if it swings with its own sound, what are the odds that it can earn a living from engagements and recordings?

Small odds, considering the few bands actually doing it. And that most of those are ghost bands, bands travelling under names that have instant recognition, such as Glenn Miller or Jimmy Dorsey. The transportation costs for big bands are enormous, an obvious first big strike against them. But that has not lessened the determination of the Bob Stone Big Band, a powerful 17-piece unit which has been playing every Wednesday night for the last two years at Chicago's Moosehead Bar & Grill. The band has played Jazzland at the Four Queens in Las Vegas and with the Four Freshmen and Pete Barbutti at the Anaheim Hilton in Anaheim, California, not to mention numerous Midwestern dates. It has one album on the stands, *Breakin' Out* (Fantasia 1001), and another, produced by Windy City Jazz, in the can, with an as-yet-unannounced release date.

Aside from its formidable playing and arranging talents, the band's collective determination to weld itself into a nationally recognized big band with an original sound is its most striking feature. The credit for forging that determination goes to Stone himself, a 37-year-old self-taught drummer who has maintained the band for 10 years, the last three without any personnel changes whatsoever.

What gives Stone the edge over many other competent leaders is his persistence. His ambition to lead a great band goes back to childhood. "That's what I always wanted," he says.

After extensive training in classical music at Cass Technical High School in Detroit ("You had 10 classes a day and eight of them were music classes") Stone did a short stint with the Detroit Symphony but quit because "it didn't swing." Stone later played with the Jimmy Dorsey, Woody Herman, and Glenn Miller bands, and for brief periods with Vic Damone, Frank Sinatra, and Lionel Hampton.

Ten years ago he took the first steps towards realizing his ambition by organizing the first edition of his band. It took seven years, however, for his personnel to stabilize, and before it did Stone's roster of musicians shifted almost constantly. "I went through literally hundreds of players to find the right guys. I've had some great musicians in the band but their heads just weren't in the right place. They were on ego trips and [saying things like] 'I should be playing lead trumpet instead of third trumpet.' That kind of thing. I finally got the guys who realized that it was a team effort. that it was much like a baseball team. When you're playing shortstop you don't complain that you should be playing first base if you're not qualified. So I've got guys now who are happy playing second alto and third trumpet and so forth."

He also has some excellent soloists, including Art Hoyle (a former lead trumpet for the Sun Ra Arkestra) and Bob Frankich (an alto saxist), to name but two out of many. His strong rhythm section includes Stone himself, the seasoned bassist Jim Atlas, and pianist Tommy Hope.

A few years before the personnel stabilized, Stone found what he needed most—his arrangers. Arrangers, after all, are as important, if not more important, to a band than its leader. The best arrangers give a band distinctive material, leaders give that material its interpretation. Stone's arrangers are Mike Pendowski and Brad Morey, both of whom are dedicated to his vision.

The 29-year-old Pendowski, who also plays tenor and soprano saxes in the band, holds a master's degree in wind and orchestral conducting from Northwestern University. Although he had written arrangements before joining the Stone band, Stone's outfit gave him his first big break. The 69-year-old Morey, on the other hand, is a veteran big band drummer and arranger going back to the early '40s. After playing a few years with territory bands out of Wisconsin, Morey began arranging for Stan Kenton, with whom he worked off and on for many years. Morey also played and arranged for Tex Beneke, Skitch Henderson, and others.

Stone's determination was one of the factors that attracted Morey. "I got interested in Bob's band about five years ago," he says. "I heard the band and I thought it had potential and I liked

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Bob's outlook. I liked his determination and the fact that nothing was going to stop him, and the fact that he felt that someday he was going to have a great band."

Pendowski shares Morey's and Stone's conviction about the band's future. "I played with small combos and other big bands [around Chicago] but this is something that is established and really going. It has been somewhere and is going other places, too. It's like the place to be. The other bands were pick-up and rehearsal bands. There are a lot of them around the city, but none of them are in the same category [with the Stone band]. This is a completely different thing. I mean, these guys are all dedicated to this. We all want to do this badly. We've given up a lot for it."

Dedication is something that Stone notes about the players, too. They are, he says, "ready to do this, and sacrifice to do it." The respect that Stone and his arrangers have for the musicians comes across immediately in conversation. "In my opinion," Pendowski says, "these are the best players in town. There are a lot of other players who sit with us who can't read the stuff I'm writing. These guys can read it.

"Most of the time if I bring a chart to any other place in town the whole band would crash in 32 bars. I'd be disappointed and they would be frustrated and ticked off and they'd say it was a terrible thing. [But] it's not the chart; they can't play it. Bob's guys can play it."

Morey agrees. "It's great to have a bunch of musicians who can play your charts. It's one thing to write a chart, it's another thing to get it played right. These guys can do it."

But the arrangers not only respect the musicians, they respect one another, too. Morey says, "I think Mike Pendowski is some sort of a genius. I really admire his ability to write. He has the ability to hear a sound in his head and know how to get it out of the band, which is a real talent. I admire him a great deal, I really do. His future is bright."

Pendowski in turn admires Morey's work. "Brad," he says, "writes great ballads." Ballads are Morey's passion. "We sort of complement each other," Morey explains. "Mike's been writing most of the real flashy up things, and I've been writing most of the ballads. I have written a couple of moderate tempo tunes, but for the most part ballads. That's really my forte. I love writing ballads. I'm just better at that than I am at up things."

Right now Stone has about 45 Morey and Pendowski charts in his library. (While most of Pendowski's charts are arrangements of his own compositions, Morey's are usually arrangements of standards.) "I've got two file cabinets chock full," Stone notes. "I mean, everything from the old Benny Goodman and Dorsey things all the way up. I've got almost the complete Thad Jones library.

"What I've got that for is if we play a dance and someone requests a tune I can go in the files and grab it out of there. But we're kind of at the point now where we can say, 'Take us as we are.' We're not trying to play somebody else's music. There's a thousand bands out there doing that, playing the music of Basie, playing the music of Miller, and all this stuff. We want to play the music of the Bob Stone Band, and that's why we're headed in the direction we're headed."

That direction, eventually, will lead to a library filled with nothing but original charts with a distinctive and immediately recognizable style shared by both Pendowski and Morey. "That's really what it's all about," Pendowski says. "The Thad Jones/Mel Lewis band had their sound and it was a reflection of what Thad and Mel thought. The Basie band had that whole Basie thing, Neal Hefti and Nestor Cole and all the guys got together and they followed the same pattern of thinking, so when you heard it you immediately knew it was the Basie band.

"Well, that's the goal that Brad and Bob and I have set. We want it so that when people hear it, regardless of whether or not they've heard the chart before, they know it's us immediately by the way it sounds."

Stone says repeatedly that he is out to create a band for the 1990s. That's his way of saying that he wants a band with a new sound. "It's like you don't go around driving a Model A Ford." By that, presumably, he means that when listeners dance to the ghost bands they're dancing to an antique sound. "It's funny because music is the biggest nostalgia thing that there is. When people want to remember something they first of all remember the music.

"That's all fine with me, I have no gripes with that at all, except that there are things happening now and there are things being created for big bands now that need to be heard just as much as the old sounds.

"Let's put it like this: when *Moonlight Serenade* came out it was radical at the time. It was an original tune. It wasn't a standard when it came out." Of course, the Stone originals are not standards, either. "But I feel that some of the things we're doing now can become jazz standards 30 years from now."

Nevertheless, Pendowski says the two biggest influences on the band are Basie and Kenton. Indeed, those influences are evident on their first album, *Breakin' Out*. Morey's ballad, *Leavin'*, has more than a few echoes of the Kenton orchestra, and Pendowski's surging piece, *Back To Basie*, is just what the title indicates.

Pendowski's early influences included not only the Basie and Kenton bands, but Louie Bellson's and Maynard Ferguson's.

According to Pendowski, his most important recent influence has been a book, *Arranging Concepts*, by Dick Grove. "His whole approach," Pendowski says, "is a very well laid out thing where you can bring the arranging down to basic denominators as far as density and weight and the span of the orchestration. It has nothing to do with style, more just hearing different colors."

Concentrating on these basics, Pendowski says, has helped him considerably by making him rethink his approach to arranging. That rethinking process has, in the last few years, led him to his own sound. "It's something I've been working on and I'm still working on it. It's not something I've perfected, by any means. But it shows in *I Love You*, and in a new arrangement of *Sister Sadie* and, to a certain extent, in *Sweet*. The things I've done in the last couple of years have that influence in them."

Stone's working relationship with his arrangers allows them a maximum of creativity within a big band setting. Stone does not tell them what to write. "Usually I just kind of let them go. They'll ask me what kind of tunes we need in the book. I'll tell them and say, 'Go ahead.' I just have input on what kind of tempo I'm looking for."

Leader and arrangers meet informally after their latest Wednesday night set to discuss what worked and what did not. They also discuss whom they should feature in a particular tune. "For example," Pendowski says, "the trombone player, Russ Phillips, is an exceptional ballad player, and Brad and I will sit down and say, 'Should we write this for Russ or should we write it for Jack?' [Jack Schmidt is Stone's lead trombonist.] 'Cause they both play ballads great, but they're different ballad players. We'll discuss who really should do it. We'll bounce ideas around and we'll talk to Bob about it. We'll even talk to Jim Atlas, the bass player, who has played with everybody and who knows a lot about what's going on. And then we'll talk to the players and see how they feel. So it's not like, 'This is how it is,' where they get the chart and they just have to take it. There's a lot of input from everybody." And it's not just on who should solo. Players will tell the arrangers whether or not they like a chart, and negative feedback has driven Pendowski to rip up charts at least twice.

"They're all great players," Pendowski reiterates, "and they know what's happening, so why not draw on that wealth of information? It doesn't make sense to ignore what they're thinking, because they're the ones who have to play it practically every week. And if they're going to play it well they're going to have to at least like something in it."

Stone claims he also tells his arrangers what he does or does not like in a chart, "and then we'll argue about it, and either they end up writing the whole chart over again or they get rid of it or I bend to their way of thinking." But that is not quite Morey's version of the process. "The way Bob does it is if you write a chart and put it in the book and he doesn't play it then you know he doesn't like it. That's about the way it goes. He doesn't like it or he doesn't like the band playing it."

Of course sometimes the arrangers are harsh critics of their own work. "Both Mike Pendowski and myself," Morey notes, "have heard our arrangements the first time down, collected them and taken them home and changed some things. I've never heard an arrangement of mine yet the first time down when I didn't think, 'Why did I do this?' or 'Why didn't I do that?' A lot of times I will take it back home and change it.

"I think that if an arranger or writer or anybody else who is creating anything is completely satisfied with what he's doing he better quit. I don't think we ever are. I don't think Mike is. I know I'm not."

A feeling of at least slight dissatisfaction with past efforts is a necessary prod to future accomplishment. Stone, obviously, is hungry, and if his band does not become what he envisions, it will be through no fault of his. Nothing exemplifies Stone's confidence in himself and his band's future more than his will, which states that when he dies his band folds. "Who else," he contends, "knows what's in my head? If somebody starts a band and they know how it's supposed to sound, how it's supposed to run, and it's their idea to start the band, how can it be the same when they're not there? There's no way that it can be." **db**

BOB STONE'S EQUIPMENT

Bob Stone plays Signature Series Sonor drums. They are custom made out of bubinga wood. Included are a 14×22-inch bass drum; 9×13, 10×14, 16×16, and 16×18 tom toms. Cymbals are all Zildjian A's, including a 20-inch rock ride, an 18-inch crash ride, an 18-inch thin crash, a 22-inch swish, a 12-inch splash, and a 14-inch quick-beat high-hat. Stone's drum sticks are Pro Mark Texas hickory 5A's and all of his drums include Remo heads. The band uses Polytone amplifiers, and Leblanc horns exclusively.

BOB ON THE BAND

"Like a big family" is the way Bob Stone depicts his band. "There are times when someone will be offered $150-200 to play somewhere else and the band will chip in to pay the difference so that member can play with us. There is a feeling that if they aren't there with us—at the Moosehead—they're letting the band down."

Who are these dedicated musicians? Bob spent some time reflecting on how great his band really is.

Bob Frankich—lead alto saxophonist. "Bob has been with the band almost from the beginning, about 11 years. He's stuck with it through thick and thin." A graduate of DePaul University, Frankich and Stone have carried the same vision about the band from the start.

Bob Rzeszutko—second alto saxophonist. Another DePaul graduate, "Bob is like a teammate for Frankich. He's been with the band for about six or seven years and is a teacher by day."

Mike Pendowski—lead tenor saxophone. "In addition to being a copyist and doing some jingle work in town, Mike is our main writer. He's also a graduate of Northwestern University."

Tony Bacca—tenor saxophone. "Tony's daytime hours include part-time teaching. His playing style comes out of the Ben Webster school. Tony's horn has a warm, pretty sound to it."

Kent Minor—baritone saxophone. Minor started with the band six or seven years ago as a tenor saxophonist, eventually replacing the outgoing baritone saxophonist. Another teacher by day, Stone says "he knows just about all of the books, having played on two different instruments. Kent can move around."

Jack Schmidt—lead trombone. Schmidt's main gig is being an owner of a printing company but that doesn't keep him from being "probably one of the best trombone players I've heard anywhere. Jack is very dedicated, always working to make the band sound better."

Russ Phillips—second trombone. Raised in a very musical atmosphere, Phillips' father played with Louis Armstrong. "Russ basically learned on the street. A magnificent musician," Stone beams, "he is one of my favorite players in the band. I don't know what I'd do without him."

Brian Jacobi—third trombone. Yet another teacher, Stone enjoys that "Brian can move around and play any chair except the bass trombone chair. An occasional soloist, he's getting into being a music copyist to help with the band's arrangements."

Richard Moss—bass trombonist. Originally the band's lead trombonist, Stone said "there was an opening for the bass trombone spot and the guys all chipped in and got Rich a horn. He mastered it, studying with a fella from the symphony."

Mark Thompson—lead trumpet. A University of Illinois grad, "Mark is a full-time musician, part-time teacher. He's a consistent, hard-driving lead trumpet player."

Mike McGrath—second trumpet and soloist. Three-and-a-half years with the band, "Mike is an excellent soloist, excellent section player, and all-around team player."

Terry Connell—third trumpet. A product of Northern Illinois University and Ron Modell, "Terry has won all kinds of awards. He's the hot soloist, the man who can scream and go way up high. Another team player."

Arthur Hoyle—fourth trumpet. "What can be said about the great Arthur Hoyle? A Chicago original, everybody who comes to town, Oscar Peterson, Louis Bellson, Lionel Hampton, asks for Art. Art is one of the older gentlemen in the band who helps to keep the younger guys in line, to explain the business."

Tommy Hope—piano. Out of Houston, Hope has been with the band 12-15 years, 10 years steady. Having worked with people like Arnett Cobb and Britt Woodman, "Tommy is the ultimate accompanist in any situation, whether it's for a singer or a band. He'll stop the band and make suggestions to Pendowski and Morey [the arrangers] to alter the arrangements. And nine-out-of-10 times, he's right."

John Moran—guitar. Moran has been with the band a little over a year, having worked in Las Vegas with Peggy Lee, among others. Stone beams: "John is another team player who prefers playing in the band to writing mortgages for banks."

Jim Atlas—string bass. With the band seven years, Atlas has played with Lena Horne, George Shearing, and Oscar Peterson. Stone relates: "Raised in Chicago, Jim was a top session man on the West Coast." Stone chuckles, "Along with Art and myself, Jim is one of the father figures trying to keep everybody straight."

—john ephland

DAVID Sylvian

by John Diliberto

Maker Of Earth-Bound Atmospheres

"I don't think you can continue to write pop music in the trivial sense and really be happy with life. You want to do something with a little more substance. And eventually you have to move into areas that aren't going to appeal to masses of people. There's something that's closer to the writer's heart than maybe anything they did before that was more commercially acceptable."

David Sylvian has moved out of the commercial mainstream, where he enjoyed success with the techno-pop group Japan, and into a more personal music that fuses his love of jazz with the avant garde.

In England, where there's something of a jazz revival going on, many pop musicians have dabbled with jazz. Joe Jackson does ersatz Blue Note records, Sting writes jazz-funk stylizations, and Bill Bruford works with improvisation and electronics with his band Earthworks. David Sylvian's current interest in jazz is just as serious, if not more so. Rather than erecting tributes or using it as window dressing, he's created something entirely new. Like Duke Ellington, he composes for the musicians he plays with, allowing their personal stamp to shape his music.

And some of those stamps are very personal indeed. On his four solo recordings to date he's had trumpeters Mark Isham and Kenny Wheeler, guitarist David Torn, pianist John Taylor, and bassist Danny Thompson. And jazz isn't the only element he draws upon. He's also played with avant garde trumpeter Jon Hassell, progressive guitarists Robert Fripp and Bill Nelson, the German eccentric Holger Czukay, and Japanese pop eclectic Ryuichi Sakamoto.

It reads like an undefinable mish-mash of sounds, a clash of styles that would submerge David Sylvian himself. But Sylvian—who plays guitar, keyboards, composes, and sings—has managed to unify these forces in his moody, literate music, establishing his own identity by exploiting the individuality of unique instrumentalists. "I think the most important thing is what ends up on the record," insists Sylvian, "and if it means that I sacrifice part of my personality appearing on a record for a great performance by somebody else that suits the piece perfectly, then that's the way it has to be. It's a matter of ego, I think."

Sylvian knows about ego. He reached his greatest popular success with the British pop group Japan, which recorded several LPs between 1978-'83. Born in England in 1958, pop music was the natural direction for any young boy with an electric guitar. He began playing at 13, along with his brother, drummer Steve Jansen. (Their real surname is Batt.) He remembers Motown as the first music to have an impact on him. "There was very little interest in music in the family," he recalls. "I have an older sister and she bought loads of Motown music. That was the first music I really heard. It sparked off my interest."

As a teenager, he formed Japan with Mick Karn, Richard Barbieri, and his brother. Bassist Karn, who toured with David Torn this past fall, recalls that their choice of instruments was a matter of looks. "It was a strange thing when we first started the band," says Karn incredulously, "because we sat down and tried to figure out what role we were each going to take up in the band. All we knew was that we wanted a band. We didn't know who was going to play what. I really think it wasn't until the third album, *Quiet Life*, that we really learned how to play our instruments."

Sylvian wound up as the frontman, playing guitar and singing. Even now, he's modest about his instrumental skills. "I'm not an adequate guitarist," he says. "I think I'm a studio-bound guitarist. I can put down on record guitar lines and solos and whatever that convey the emotion that I'm looking for and the mood I'm looking for, but I could never play that in a live context. And I'm not a good piano player, but when it comes to creating atmospheres it's more a question of sound than technical ability. So I get by with synthesizers."

He'll have to show some proficiency this spring when he makes his first U.S. tour with Mark Isham, Steve Jansen, David Torn, and bassist Ian Maidman.

In his Japan days, Sylvian had sculpted blonde hair, wore eye make-up, and had an aloof, aristocratic manner. When we spoke in the manager's office in London, his natural brown hair was pulled into a disheveled pony tail, he had two days beard growth, and wore glasses. According to

LAURIE LEWIS

Sylvian, Japan's early days were a classic example of record company manipulation.

"It was a difficult period because, one thing, there was the punk and disco," laments Sylvian. "That's all there was and it was impossible to get a deal at that point in time. We were totally confused by what we were doing and we were surrounded by people totally unsympathetic to helping us. We were being forced into a very commercial position. The people who had signed us up did so purely on an image basis and they really weren't interested in the music."

Karn and Sylvian agree that Japan reached its zenith on the album *Tin Drum*. It drifted out like a psychological mist wafting over the emotional moors. One song, *Ghosts*, with its Morton Subotnick-style electronics and Sylvian's mournful, bass vocal refrain, was far removed from the pop mainstream. It was also a hit in England. "When we reached the point of going to the studio to make *Tin Drum*, we were told it was going to be our last album," recalls Karn ruefully. "The record company was no longer behind us. And our manager was going to give us up once the album was finished, so we decided if that was the attitude, then let's make the album we always wanted to make without any compromises. Take as long as we want and really make sure that we're happy with this one. The ironic thing was, it ended up being the successful album."

It was too little, too late, however. Japan broke up, but Sylvian went on a spiritual and musical odyssey and after a few singles, recorded his solo debut, *Brilliant Trees*. The music, played with trumpeters Isham, Kenny Wheeler, and Jon Hassell, and bassist Danny Thompson, reflected Sylvian's discovery of jazz. "I think my tastes have changed dramatically," exudes Sylvian. "I mean '80, '81, '82, that's when I started listening to people like Miles Davis, Coltrane, and Bill Evans. That was the beginning of a new period for me because I was totally unsatisfied with what I was listening to, mainly in the pop world, and I just started looking for other things and I found it in jazz."

Sylvian, who is a visual artist and recently had a book of his photography published called *Perspectives*, found a correlation between jazz and painting. "It was a sudden growing awareness that happened around that time of the power of art," he explains, "and that's when I began to want

to work with jazz artists, instead of just making structured pop music which, although I loved it at the time, is in the end quite vacuous, I think, or superficial. It doesn't have enough depth to it."

Brilliant Trees was a haunting record filled with brooding atmospheres driven by Jansen's ritualistic slow-funk rhythms. As he has on all his recordings since *Brilliant Trees*, Sylvian writes compositions for the musicians he wants to play on them, artists who he has admired over the years. He agrees, "Most of them are people I've admired since I was very young. I'm loathe to work with session musicians because you don't get a soulful performance out of the people and they don't ever become involved in the work. So I wanted people that could come in and be involved in the work in some way. Because I'm so familiar with their work I think I can anticipate what they'll react to and so I choose very carefully the people to perform on certain pieces."

Often the music sounds so much like the artists he has playing with them, Sylvian gives them a co-composing credit, as he did with guitarist Robert Fripp on much of the *Gone To Earth* album and Jon Hassell on *Words With The Shaman*. "He obviously has digested things that he likes," says Hassell of Sylvian, "and he's forthright enough to, rather than trying to fake it or mock it up somehow, invite the people themselves to do it."

Gone To Earth is a two-record set featuring one disc of atmospheric, moody instrumentals that owe much to the music of Brian Eno. "Yes," admits Sylvian. "In fact, if you asked all the members of Japan what their 10 favorite records are, I'm sure that *Another Green World* by Brian Eno would be one of them." Which may account for the presence of Fripp—an Eno cohort, whose Frippertronics, a looping delay system he employs, envelops *Gone To Earth*.

"What I would do at the David Sylvian sessions," explains Fripp, "is set the equipment up and just for fun punch something into the Fripp-in-the-box and leave it playing in the studio, walk out and come back some three or four hours later and there it was still going—except the sound had changed in the three or four hours in between. And with Sylvian, he really liked what was coming out, so he recorded lots and lots and lots of these little soundscape pieces, and they're all over his *Gone To Earth* album."

"Yes, that's right," laughs Sylvian, when I relate that story. "I think we all left the studio, went out for coffee while we recorded these hours and hours of Frippertronics." To be sure Fripp also offered serpentine solos on *Wave* and crunching distended power chords to the title track, *Gone To Earth*.

Sylvian's lyrics smolder with a dark sensuality, tempered by a spiritual mysticism. After living for nearly a decade in England's trendy youth culture, he found himself looking for more in life than next week's hair color. *Gone To Earth* is peppered with the spoken recordings of J.G. Bennett, a disciple of the mystic philosopher G. I. Gurdjieff, in much the same way Fripp has used them. But Sylvian, who discovered Gurdjieff around the recording of *Brilliant Trees* in '83, claims he isn't a follower. "A lot of these things were going on," he reflects. "I was making lots of discoveries within myself and through literature and what have you. Changes were happening at that point and I think that's why the music changed so radically. And it's been a continual spiritual growth within and finding myself more comfortable with the style of composition I'm now doing."

His search reached its peak on *Gone To Earth*. "You see, it's very difficult for me to talk about what went into the making of *Gone To Earth*," he says. "It came out a very important period for me in my life which was heightening awareness of my spiritual self, and I think the music was a natural extension, or growth out of that period.

"I write far more material than I ever did in the past," he continues. "The inspiration comes from within and that was a kind of turnaround. Before I would always need these outside stimulants. Traveling was a great stimulant at one point for me, especially when I was in Japan, the group. Now I don't need that so much. I find there's a kind of well within me that hasn't run dry and it just keeps on coming."

Sylvian's newest album, *Secrets Of The Beehive*, is his most ambitious, yet subtle recording. While his previous albums floated on electronic textures and studio atmospheres, *Secrets Of The Beehive* is almost entirely acoustic, with spartan string arrangements by Ryuichi Sakamoto, the lyrical bass of Danny Thompson, and Mark Isham once again playing trumpet. It's a personal and intimate collection that reveals Sylvian's melodic gifts and the resonant baritone of his voice.

"I think it's because of the strength of the lyrics that I felt I didn't have to embroider the arrangements at all," he explains. "So I've kept them very sparse as usual, but with just either an acoustic piano and strings or acoustic guitars and strings. They're all really straightforward arrangements, and they're all really straightforward songs. The strength in the album lies in the composing, not so much in the creating of atmospheres in the studio. So it's an old-fashioned way of writing, because it's really just putting down songs that I'd written at home."

Because of its acoustic nature, and its lack of percussion, *Secrets Of The Beehive*, has an intimate, smokey atmosphere. But the intimacy is studio-wrought. These musicians aren't playing off each other in person, but on tape. "They don't have people to interact with," admits Sylvian, "they just interact to what's on tape. On a piece like *Mother And Child*, the first thing that went down was the bass, and the line was pieced together from three or four tapes. Then the percussion [David Cummings] was laid down. It's a very controlled way of getting improvised performances." Especially with Sakamoto laying down a very uncontrolled Cecil Taylor-like improvisation.

One of the musicians was guitarist David Torn, who offered subtle environmental backgrounds of delay-looped guitar and solo flourishes that flitted on the periphery of Sylvian's compositions. "David and Mark had the most freedom on the record and they were really left to their own devices as far as the recording went," says Sylvian.

Torn concurs, "I think he was after the more open, atmospheric, almost ECMish type stuff from me; a space sound/ambient thing. It was an interesting session because he didn't have any idea what he wanted me to do at all. And what he told me when I arrived was that he knew what he wanted everyone else to do. But me, he said, 'Okay, you can be the wild card and I just have no idea; why don't you just try some stuff?'"

The dark instrumental moods that Sylvian paints are ultimately an extension of his lyrics, which are introspective to the point of psycho-therapy. "A lot of my music has to do with the desire to belong and at the same time it has this sense of isolation about it and conflicting emotions," he confesses. "The beehive in many cultures represents a family, a social unity as well as a kind of spiritual hierarchy, and I just used the imagery as in a desire to belong to a family or a group of people with similar ideals, if you like, which I don't find basically. I mean I've always felt very isolated and I'm happy in my isolation, but I have this strange desire to belong, and it's these conflicting feelings, emotions that I think run throughout the album like a theme and have run throughout my work in the past." **db**

DAVID SYLVIAN'S EQUIPMENT

Sylvian's first instrument was a guitar, and it remains his primary instrument on which he composes his music. He plays a Fender Stratocaster for his electric. He also plays a Spanish acoustic guitar.

He fleshes out many of his arrangements using synthesizers, his favorite still being the Prophet 5. He also uses a Prophet VS and a Kurzweil 250, which he used extensively on *Secrets Of The Beehive* in the composition stage. "It influenced the writing I did with sampled brass," says Sylvian.

His home studio is equipped with the Akai 1412 recorder, a combination tape deck and mixing console which records 12 tracks on a VHS video cassette built into the mixing desk.

DAVID SYLVIAN SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

as a leader

SECRETS OF THE BEEHIVE—Virgin 7 90677-1
BRILLIANT TREES—Virgin 2290
GONE TO EARTH—Virgin 90577-1
ALCHEMY—AN INDEX OF POSSIBILITIES—Virgin EP SYL 1

with Japan

ADOLESCENT SEX—Ariola 50037
OBSCURE ALTERNATIVES—Ariola 50047
QUIET LIFE—Ariola 8011
GENTLEMEN TAKE POLAROIDS—Virgin 138
TIN DRUM—Virgin 2209
JAPAN—Epic 37914
OIL ON THE CANVAS—Virgin 2513
EXORCISING GHOSTS—Virgin 3510

★★★★★ EXCELLENT ★★★★ VERY GOOD ★★★ GOOD ★★ FAIR ★ POOR

STEVIE WONDER

CHARACTERS—Motown 6248ML: *You Will Know; Dark'n'Lovely; In Your Corner; With Each Beat Of My Heart; One Of A Kind; Skeletons; Get It; Galaxy Paradise; Cryin' Through The Night; Free.*

Personnel: *Wonder, vocals, Synclavier, Moog bass, piano, clavichord, spinet, strings, bells, synthesizers, wave synthesizer, Fairlight, bass, percussion, drums, heartbeat; Ben Bridges, guitar (cuts 5, 7), acoustic guitar (10); Brad Buxer, synthesizer (5), Moog synthesizer (10); Isaiah Sanders, synthesizer (5), horn synthesizer (10); Robert Arbittier, computer and synthesizer programming (6); Nathan Watts, synthesizer bass (10); Dennis Davis, percussion (10); Julian Bahula and ADE, African drums (10); Michael Jackson, lead vocals (7); James Allen, background vocals (2); Bridgette Bryant, background vocals (2, 5, 9, 10); Keith John, background vocals (2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 10); Myx, background vocals (2); Syreeta, background vocals (2); Shirley Brewer, Kevin Dorsey, Alexis England, Dorian Holley, Melody McCully, Darryl Phinnesse, background vocals (3, 6); Lynne Fiddmont background vocals (3, 5, 6, 9, 10); Junior Giscombe, background vocals (5); Marva Hicks, background vocals (5, 10); Mary Lee Evans, background vocals (7, 9); Steve Wise, background vocals (8); Paul Johnson, background vocals (9); Gospel Choir, background vocals (10).*

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

"Where he lives, they don't use colored people." Stevie Wonder, *Living In The City*.

I don't know if anybody needs to be reminded just how incredibly long-lived, how consistently surprising, entertaining, and provocative, how damn *good* Stevie Wonder's music has been over the last 20 years. If you do, stop and think for a second about his prodigious talents. He's one of the best songwriters in American pop—period; he's usually too tough to let his songs get away without working them into something nobody could quite expect. He's got a scary chameleonic voice that can bath you in an erotic glow or freeze your blood, whether he's filigreeing a melody or digging into his soul. He can play any instrument that's put in front of him. He can conceive arrangements that combine the density loved by fellow Motowners like Marvin Gaye and Smokey Robinson with the paredback feel of the blues at its most haunting. He is an American classic, heir to this country's enormous musical wealth and diversity (and frighteningly ingenious about how he uses that heritage), father to such different sons as Michael Jackson (who makes a ghostly cameo by way of Tokyo here), Prince, and Terence Trent D'Arby. But in essence he remains only himself and thus, like Jimi Hendrix, absolutely unmistakable and ultimately unimitatable in any significant way.

Wonder was one of the first great black musicians able to wrestle the music biz into granting him—the ultimate horror—control over what he did. Squatting in the studio Hendrix built for his own use for over a year after Jimi's death, with two technicians who were developing ways to program the primitive ancestors of what we now know as synthesizers, training them to fantastic leaps of imagination on endless reels of tape, sculpting a new sound all his own, Wonder waited his childhood Motown contract out as he filled up the tapes with what he heard his music coming to be—and sat on them until he got his terms. Ever since, he's been doing just what he wants, telling us in no uncertain terms what's on his mind.

Whether it's operating at peak insight, as on *Talking Book* or *Innervisions*, trying things that might be better left undone, like *Stevie Wonder's Journey Through The Secret Life Of Plants*, or even doodling another Top-40 hit like *I Just Called To Say I Love You*, that ramified mind has always seen his music as a way to comment on and change the world that surrounds it. So it is with *Characters*. Drugs, apartheid, divine providence, human (self-) deception, justice, the Apocalypse, freedom, love, and redemption are just a few of the themes he explores on this musical odyssey through gritty funk, Beatles harmonies, Prince-style beats, Buppie dance music, and African roots.

If that sounds like it's too diverse to hold together, it's not. Wonder is no asshole who likes to gulp down and shit out undigested bits of musical history, note-for-note mouthfuls of instantly recognizable pablumized past (Is that a Rickenbacher? This must be 1964), then stand back to say, with pompous irony, Look, Ma, no hands. His fingerprints are everywhere, and the result—this disc—is impossible to imagine without his mediating intelligence at work. His aesthetic works by juxtaposition and mutual illumination, and unfolds ever further with successive listenings. Take as a relatively straightforward example how *Cryin' Through The Night* is a virtual thesaurus of blues lines stretched over dancefloor music. Take as a more complex example how *Dark'n'Lovely* draws on a chord progression whose intimations of rage and protest reach back to the 1960's, filters that through synth sounds that could only be now, and puts the result in service of lyrics that speak to South African premier Botha from both above (the Sun God) and below (the oppressed and murdered peoples of the shebeens). Take the ironic bounce driving the friendly treachery the lyrics describe in *In Your Corner*, the acerbic funk hammering home the list of last judgements in *Skeletons*, the lilting defiance and affirmation that spreads over the African drums and backing gospel choir on *Free*. Take this album's title and its explanatory definitions on the inside cover, its in-the-round understanding of what philosophers used to call the human condition, its sheer musicality. Take it home and listen, and dance, and learn, and enjoy.

—gene santoro

WORLD SAXOPHONE QUARTET

DANCES AND BALLADS—Nonesuch 9 79164 1: *Sweet D; For Lester; Belly Up; Cool Red; Hattie Wall; Adjacent; West African Snap; Full, Deep And Mellow; Dance Until Dawn (For Little Anthony); Fast Life.*

Personnel: *Julius Hemphill, soprano, alto saxophone, flute; Oliver Lake, soprano, alto saxophone; David Murray, tenor saxophone, bass clarinet; Hamiet Bluiett, baritone saxophone, alto clarinet.*

★ ★ ★ ★

CLARINET SUMMIT

SOUTHERN BELLS—Black Saint 0107: *Don't Get Around Much Anymore; Fluffy's Blues; I Want To Talk About You; Beat Box; Southern Bells; Perdido; Mbizo.*

Personnel: *Alvin Battiste, John Carter, Jimmy Hamilton, B-flat clarinets; David Murray, bass clarinet.*

★ ★ ★ ★

The World Saxophone Quartet has become a jazz institution by a number of measurements, and Clarinet Summit is following the same trajectory. Such status entails a dilemma, especially when innovation is the crux of the ensemble's charter, as past breakthroughs tend to become today's signature pieces, and tomorrow's clichés. Subsequently, the idea of yet another recording of *Hattie Wall* is an affrontive redundancy, but this newest reading is fulfilling and enlivening, nonetheless. Likewise, Clarinet Summit's reliance on Ellingtonia to feature Jimmy Hamilton is threatening to become a pat tactic, a moot point upon hearing his winsome duet with John Carter on *Perdido*.

The measure of vitality for long-lived ensembles is not the staying power of their most well-known works, but the deepening of the collective chemistry, catalysed by the ongoing compositional output of its members. While WSQ has equalled its previous best efforts on *Dances And Ballads*, which contains several new pieces that may someday be considered among the Quartet's classics, Clarinet Summit meets this criteria only adequately on *South-*

CONTINUED ON PAGE 32

THE TWANG GANG

By Robin Tolleson

The guitar has long been an important voice in jazz, but in jazz-fusion it's *really* come to the forefront. A Robben Ford blues-rock solo will kick a crowd into a frenzy at a typical jazz fest. These new releases by some of the most notable "fusion" guitarists fronting bands these days give you an idea of how many guitarist bandleaders there are. Six new records hit the market recently, and we're not even talking Abercrombie, Holdsworth, McLaughlin, Morse, Beck, Santana, Scofield, or Khan.

DiMeola, Ritenour, Eubanks, Watanabe, Henderson, and Bullock are all at different stages of pursuing the muse and refining their art, trying to be rock stars or revered struggling artists. There's nothing wrong with attempting to appeal to the mass market, with a jazz musician trying to cross over to pop. It's just that jazzers have a habit and history of being terrible when trying to sell out.

Al DiMeola must be considered one of the uncles of fusion guitar, coming in on Bill Connors' heels in Chick Corea's Return To Forever. Al was the incredibly talented kid in the band when RTF was at its commercial peak, around the *Romantic Warrior* days. Al's playing has always been on the romantic side, melodically speaking. On *Tirami Su* (Manhattan 46995), the Al DiMeola Project brings together ex-Corea drummer Tommy Brechtlein and Airto's keyboardist Kei Akagi, sees the estimable bassist Anthony Jackson low-toning it, and generally finds DiMeola, still the swift-handed one, back closer to *Land Of The Midnight Sun* and *Elegant Gypsy*, upgraded a bit technologically. Nothing wrong with that. Al knows his sequencers and computers, and keeps technology working in his favor. He includes some acoustic work over a percussion section, the vocals of Jose Renato, and writes perhaps his most beautiful ballad to date, *Smile From A Stranger.*

Kazumi Watanabe's been putting out some great stuff recently. His *Mobo* records featuring Sly and Robbie, Steve Jordan and other New York stalwarts have been fascinating, and the one with his mostly Japanese touring band (*Mobo Splash*) was every bit as adventurous. Now he's put one out with bassist Jeff Berlin and drummer Bill Bruford, who worked together in Bruford's band for several years, and are made to order. Few bassists could play the extremely difficult parts demanded with the cool disdain also sought by the icy drummer. On Watanabe's *Spice Of Life* (Gramavision 18-8706-1), Bruford shifts the beat around as his radical but logical whims direct, all the while keeping it grooving. *Melancho* even plays off a

PAUL NATKIN/PHOTO RESERVE

Al DiMeolo

Crimson-type chant, complete with Watanabe's best Fripp-isms. Side two actually works better than the first, surprising perhaps because there Bruford and Berlin are given their composing space. Watanabe knows how not only to pick musicians, but also to write for them and let them speak out. The guitarist never lets you sit still in your seat long enough to peg him, and he knows how to get the best from his bands. Spice of life, indeed.

Hiram Bullock and **Kevin Eubanks** look like they attended the same photo session for their latest records. Looks like they had the same acting coaches too. The album covers show off the guitarists' best bedroom eyes—in order to help boost record sales, is my guess. They've got the sweat machines out and both guys look like they just ran through a sprinkler

On Hiram's *Give It What U Got* (Atlantic 7 81790-1), *Half Life* is lovely, and worth all the butt-shaking it took to get to that point on the record. It's beautiful in structure and in the long ending vamp, which is like Weather Report's *A Remark You Made*. Other notables include *Down The Pipe*, and some searing groove numbers like *Give It What U Got* (yes, song titles like Prince) and *Gotta Get Your Jollys*. Hiram makes no bones about the fact that he wanted this to be a "groove" record—in fact he explains that on the back cover. Maybe this record will get Hiram's rock & roll ya-yas out, so that he can go back to Gil Evans' band and not blast everybody away. Hah. Probably not. His cover of *Pretzel Logic* is a pleasant few minutes, like a favorite third cousin visiting for the afternoon. A nice choice. And Al Jarreau doing *You Send Me* is another quality cut. Hiram's starting to get a handle on this record-making stuff.

Kevin Eubanks is a Philadelphia native, still shy of his 30th birthday, and *The Heat Of Heat* (GRP 1041) shows his growth into pop (the title track is a cover of a Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis tune) to go along with his acclaimed acoustic and electric guitar work. The album is produced by George Benson, and if you didn't know better you'd think it was George himself playing once or twice. It's a rich sounding record, and Eubanks is from the school of melody and subtle charm rather than harmonic invention or rhythmic outreach. This is pleasant fare, but Kevin's guitar playing is watered down a bit too much. It doesn't measure up to the instrumental excitement of his 1983 Elektra debut, *Guitarist*, or *Opening Nights*, his GRP outing with Branford Marsalis. *In A Few* has one of *Heat Of Heat*'s best rhythm tracks, and Eubanks seems inspired playing over it. But there are far too few of these type of moments. Too MOR. It's hard to find Patrice Rushen on a couple numbers she guests on here, but she's allowed to play a bit on *Third Interior*, a trio piece with Ron Carter. This is an album I might have been pleased with from Benson, but for some reason, not Eubanks.

Another record from **Lee Ritenour**? Yes, the Captain still has Fingers. Not whittled down to nubs yet. Lee sounds great in a couple spots on *Portrait* (GRP 1042). Ritenour always looks the same on the covers of his albums, like the smiling boy next door—non-threatening—and that's pretty much what his music is like, especially on *Portrait*, with his acoustic, Captain Gloss sound. Ritenour has been imitated so much that it might be easy to say he doesn't have an original sound. Guys like him—Larry Carlton, David Sanborn, Nathan East—probably have that problem. Lee sounds a little too comfortable on *Portrait*. He's backed by the Yellowjackets on much of the LP, but they don't really get to stretch. Russ Ferrante's *White Water* has a swirling sequenced sound, and it builds nicely, like a quick run downstream that puts you in a calm blue lake. Rit is good at painting nice scenery with his music, but often that one main voice that delivers the knockout punch is missing, either in the compositions or in the playing. The guitarist doesn't take full advantage of his space. With all the new synth-axes on the market, we're not always playing better. And with the new composer software, we're not writing better songs.

The first five minutes of **Scott Henderson**'s *Dr. Hee* (Passport Jazz 88030) seem to blow away Rit's whole LP, with saxman Bob Sheppard handing out calling cards, and Henderson coming in to destroy the place. It's bad. Trapsman Steve Houghton seeks to make a name for himself on *Salsa Lastra* and *Ominous*, splashing around with precision and thought. Henderson's group explores it all—rock, odd-times, latin grooves, oriental changes, even some bop. And the playing is stronger and more inspired than on most of the rest of these albums. Los Angeles is home to session guitarist Henderson and most of the versatile musicians on *Dr. Hee*. Maybe the guy who *hasn't* put out a dozen albums has the advantage in this case. Henderson calls his group Tribal Tech, theoretically mixing the old and the new. Gary Willis helps on bass, and mallet percussionist Brad Dutz is a more mysterious version of Dave Samuels. The writing, instrumentation, and arranging—it's all here. Fans of fine instrumental music will appreciate this one. **db**

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BLUEBIRDS OF HAPPINESS

By John McDonough

The LP continues to be the preferred format for reissues—by me, at least. Compare the RCA Bluebird series, CD vs LP. A recent Fats Waller CD called *The Joint Is Jumpin'* offers 23 cuts for about $15; not bad for a CD. But the latest LP entry of *The Complete Fats Waller* series (Volume 4, RCA/Bluebird 5583)—and the first since 1982—carries 28 sides at about two-thirds the CD price. At only seven titles a side (not eight), it's not the value the earlier volumes were. But, like other LPs in the Bluebird line, it still beats the CD, especially with all issues of sound and fidelity in a dead heat.

I occasionally wonder about the direction the great American novelists like Hemingway, Fitzgerald, and Faulkner might have taken if they hadn't labored within a literary zeitgiest severely circumscribed by Victorian prudishness—if they'd written today instead. One can only wonder. By the same token, I wonder how different **Fats Waller**'s legacy would sound today if he hadn't been circumscribed by the three-minute limits of record technology that ruled his era. It was a devilish restriction because the player, his concepts, his very thinking often became its prisoner and was forced to submit to its formulas. This was certainly true of the brilliant Waller; and the consequences of formula are magnified when performances originally released in pairs come out in LP and CD concentrations. It's particularly unhappy because the power of Waller's piano strains to break loose in cut after cut. The other problem with Waller in this restricted form is the dreadful nature of the songs—a problem dramatised and discussed in Richard Sudhalter's notes. To Waller's credit, he didn't take them seriously. *The Curse Of An Aching Heart* is one of his most famous sides, and one of his most typical, too. *He* mocked its ineptness. He kicked it around like a tin can. But this turned him into a clown, a reputation that vastly undervalued his musicianship, yet one which these records—which bring his discography up to 1936—do little to repair.

Louis Armstrong's *Pops* (RCA/Bluebird 5920-1-RB) takes up Armstrong's career during a post-war lull that saw the end of his big band and a tenuous transition back to small groups. The band had become a fine journeyman outfit by this time, but it came of age too late. By 1946 there was nothing left for it to achieve but parity. Big bands had reached their manifest destiny. But the power of Armstrong's trumpet remains endlessly arresting, even in the all-too-brief flashes the post-war pop arrangements allow him here. The second LP in this set of two has the first 15 small groups. What at the time was a nostalgic reunion between Louis and Kid Ory produced a rocking finale on *Where The Blues Were Born*, a *Now You Has Jazz*-style number from a movie; and a good *Mahoganny Hall Stomp*. The last eight sides with Jack Teagarden hit a stride, with Louis up to his best form on *Jack Armstrong Blues*.

As Armstrong dissolved his big band, his lineal descendent, **Dizzy Gillespie**, began building his. *Dizziest* (RCA/Bluebird 5785-1-RB) charts its spectacular rise and fall in a complete two-LP edition of RCA-owned Gillespie, save for the 1937 Teddy Hill sides and the 1949 Metronome All-star session. From Fletcher Henderson to Eddie Sauter to Tadd Dameron, big band writing reached farther and farther out. With these sides, it could reach no farther, as it not only sought to orchestrate the harmonic and rhythmic codes of bop, but fuse them with Cuban rhythms as well. Through it all, Gillespie's playing is consistently bold and ingenious. But despite the excellence of many of the band pieces—and they are something to hear—the four septets that open the two-fer (*52nd St. Theme*, *Night In Tunisia*, et. al.) imply a notion that's hard to escape—that bebop was inherently a small group form, and transposing its grammar to eight brass and five reeds turned its natural energies into contrived effects, novelty, and onomatopoeic vocals. Moreover, in the reach for iconoclasm, the natural balance between brass and reeds was often swept away in shrill and showy brass writing. After some impressive early efforts (*Manteca*, *Woody 'n You*, *Good Bait*), the road leads inevitably to commercial things like *Let's Eat No Meat*. Nevertheless, this remains an essential set for any serious Gillespie listener.

Late Lament (RCA/Bluebird 5778-1-RB) finds **Paul Desmond**, who was the principle jazz credential of the Dave Brubeck Quartet when this single LP was recorded in 1961/62, luxuriating in pretty and pensive string/woodwind ensembles. The music is lovely and lyrical, made in a time when such words were still eulogies, not epithets. Desmond is a descendent of Trumbauer, Hackett, and Prez; brother in spirit of Lee Konitz and Stan Getz; and father to no one I can think of offhand. His sound is cool without being cold, warm without being hot, and entirely at home in such a setting as this. The tempos are moderate to slow, the solo work melodic. Guitarist Jim Hall provides attractive buffer zones between Desmond's soft winds of improvisation.

Johnny Hodges, the alto for all ages, made a couple of LPs for Victor in the '60s, and *Triple Play* (RCA/Bluebird 5903-1-RB) was the better of the pair. Now it's better still

CONTINUED ON PAGE 35

ern Bells. The less intensive itinerary kept by Clarinet Summit factors into their heavier use of not only repertory material, but originals that do little more than bracket unaccompanied solos (Alvin Battiste's tart *Fluffy's Blues*), or jettison improvised polyphony (David Murray's intriguing, emotionally wrung tribute to Johnny Dyani, *Mbizo*). Probing compositions like Carter's title piece, which forwards fluid, evolving relationships between improvised and notated materials, are the exception, not the rule.

Dances And Ballads argues against the usually supportable view that Julius Hemphill is the Quartet's principal composer, even though *Sweet D*, a funky, ostinati-driven juggernaut, and the ballad *Cool Red* (which, like a rose, is all petals and thorny stem) are among the program's higher points. One of his most nuance-filled compositions, Murray's *Dance Until Dawn* is a shadowy, alluring dreamscape, with bluesy figures rising from and receding into a fog-draped background; the entwined lines of Murray and Hamiet Bluiett's bass and alto clarinet duet brings the muted drama to a simmer. Oliver Lake's *Belly Up*, whose soaring theme finds his soprano dovetailing Hemphill's, and *Adjacent*, which slips supple ballad changes for solos by Hemphill and Murray between pensive voicings, are arguably his strongest compositions recorded by WSQ.

On balance, the World Saxophone Quartet and Clarinet Summit have not rested upon their laurels. Battiste's *Beat Box*, a waggish hybrid of New Music drone and Hip-Hop staccato, and Lake's loose-limbed nod to Afro-pop, *West African Snap*, reflect a necessary ear-to-the-ground sensibility both WSQ and the Summit need to remain vital. If a deft mixture of formula and the sidestepping of formula is the gauge, then both ensembles are improving with age.

—bill shoemaker

HENRY BUTLER

THE VILLAGE—MCA/Impulse 2-8023: *What's Up?; Beautiful, She Is; Joanna; The Village; Reflections; Expressions Of Quietude; Swinging At The Palace; Music Came; Soft Platonicism; The Entertainer.*

Personnel: *Butler, piano, synthesizer (cut 6), vocal (8); Ron Carter, bass (1-9); Jack DeJohnette, drums (1-9); John Purcell, soprano saxophone, english horn, flute, oboe (1-3, 7-9); Alvin Batiste, clarinet (4-5, 8, 10); Bob Stewart, tuba (10).*

★ ★ ★ ★

Henry Butler's second album harks back to the days when double-albums were particularly

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Sextet/Piano Variations/
Piano Quartet

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This New Generation

WORLD SAXOPHONE QUARTET
Dances and Ballads

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Early Works

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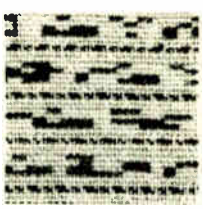

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ambitious affairs. But *The Village* is retro-'60s in more ways than that: Butler wears his Impulse-iveness on his sleeve, taking his label's heritage seriously. His Trane tendencies are undisguised, in tunes that pivot on incantatory figures: *What's Up?*, *Palace*, *The Village*. *Joanna* declares itself a Coltrane waltz via rhythmic feel and Purcell's pliant, declamatory soprano.

Like other mainstream modernists, Butler is busy reinvestigating ensemble motion. His rhythm is Trane-inspired but tighter in execution. Picture McCoy Tyner going easy on the sustain pedal—that's Henry's departure point. DeJohnette may focus on cymbals like Elvin, but his attack is crisper, decay times shorter. Ron Carter, like Jimmy Garrison, is an anchor not overly reliant on lazy patterns. And Butler's Louisiana roots thicken the stew, coming through in *What's Up?*'s triplet feel, and in the way he piles three on four, riding out *Swinging At The Palace*.

Meanwhile, the range of colors on top gives *The Village* appealing scope. Butler adds credible Spanish guitar (played on an electric keyboard) to *Quietude*, and lends his resonant voice to Alvin Batiste's annunciatory *Music Came*. Elsewhere, the fourth voice belongs to Alvin Batiste or sopranoist/doubler John Purcell (who plays flute on the stately *Beautiful*, and english horn on the attractive ballad *Platonicism*). Batiste's clarinet is put to excellent use; *The Village*'s piping theme fits him so snugly, you're content just to hear him reiterate it. If Butler's missed a bet, it's by not using Purcell and Batiste together—a five-note oboe cameo on *Music Came* notwithstanding.

The only track featuring two horns is *The Entertainer*, for clarinet, piano, and Bob Stewart's tuba. Modernizing ragtime remains fiendishly difficult; Butler invests the composition with the jaunty phrasing and peppy gait Joplin detested, and makes it work. The beat-lagging on the B strain underscores the syncopation; the trio breathe new life into the tune that made ragtime a '70s fad. But Butler knows that revivalism will transcend faddism, if the feel is right—whether you're looking back to 1902 or 1962. He plays all he attempts with gratifying conviction. ***—kevin whitehead***

POWER TOOLS

STRANGE MEETING—Antilles/New Directions 90627-1: *Strange Meeting; Wolf In Sheep's Clothing; Wadmalaw Island; Unscientific Americans; Howard Beach Memoirs; When We Go; The President's Nap; A Song Is Not Enough; Blame & Shame; Unchained Melody.*

Personnel: *Bill Frisell, guitar; Melvin Gibbs, electric bass; Ronald Shannon Jackson, drums.*

★ ★ ★

MARC JOHNSON'S BASS DESIRES

SECOND SIGHT—ECM 1351: *Crossing The Corpus Callosum; Small Hands; Sweet Soul; Twister; Thrill Seekers; Prayer Beads; 1951; Hymn For Her.*
Personnel: *Johnson, bass; Bill Frisell, John Scofield, guitar; Peter Erskine, drums.*

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

On these two albums, Bill Frisell's guitar goes over, under, sideways, down—and sometimes backwards.

With Bass Desires, Frisell plays vertically. He spins out textures and colors for the other players to slice through. His use of electronic devices and oddball approaches here is a virtual textbook of post-modern rhythm guitar. Frisell doesn't just outline the chord structures, he creates environments.

With Power Tools, Frisell moves horizontally, playing long lines that probe and sizzle and explode. His subtlety sometimes gets lost in the exuberant downtown bashing of Gibbs and Jackson, but it's fun to hear him slither through *Unscientific Americans* and hang up sheets of feedback on *The President's Nap*, where he sounds like the angry ghost of Jimi Hendrix.

The Power Tools album is guaranteed to clean out your ears the first time through, but *Second Sight* has more staying power. It's more cohesive, and the tunes cover more ground. Unlike the first Bass Desires album, which started out with a bang on *Samurai Hee-Haw*, this one sneaks up on you. *Crossing The Corpus Callosum* is wide-open but restrained, with a clever structure that hides beneath the zig-zagging improvisations. (The *corpus callosum*, for those of you who dozed off in biology class, is the nerve bundle that connects the two sides of the brain.) Frisell's *Small Hands*, up next, is a delicate ballad with a melody that unfurls slowly amid shimmering arpeggios.

Things start to heat up on *Sweet Soul*, then everybody cuts loose on John Scofield's *Twister*, a jazzed up *Twist & Shout*. Frisell plays a great little psychedelic solo. The temperature stays high on *Thrill Seekers* (Frisell's solo sounds like a swarm of bees), but the mood turns bittersweet on *Prayer Beads*, Marc Johnson's solo piece. Frisell's *1951* is Loony Tunes bebop, and the album comes full circle on the melancholy *Hymn For Her*.

Strange Meeting, the Power Tools debut, doesn't have this kind of range. It starts out full-tilt and pretty much stays that way. (The exception is Frisell's *A Song Is Not Enough*, which serves as a brief interlude before the band's last sonic assault.) Shannon Jackson creates the textures on this one, throwing up walls of percussion that Frisell scrambles over, scoots around, or blasts through.

The wackiest tunes on the album (*Wolf In Sheep's Clothing*, *Unscientific Americans*) have the loping grooves that always make me think of Captain Beefheart—where is he?—

and Frisell is alert and resourceful throughout, searching for just one *more* sound he can wring from his guitar. Credit must also go to Melvin Gibbs, who steers a steady course through the harmolodic chop and never—not once—slaps or pops his bass. That might be the most revolutionary thing about this entertaining but erratic album. *—jim roberts*

PAUL DESMOND

THE COMPLETE RECORDINGS OF THE PAUL DESMOND QUARTET WITH JIM HALL—Mosaic 6-120: *East Of The Sun; For All We Know; I Get A Kick Out Of You; Greensleeves; Two Degrees East, Three Degrees West; Time After Time; You Go To My Head; Susie; Out Of Nowhere; The One I Love; Polka Dots And Moonbeams; Samba De Orfeu; Poor Butterfly; Theme From Black Orpheus; Embarcadero* (alternate version), *El Prince; El Prince* (alternate take); *Alone Together; The Night Has A Thousand Eyes* (alternate version); *Nancy; Embarcadero; Blues For Fun; Take Ten; That Old Feeling; Angel Eyes; Rude Old Man; A Taste Of Honey; When Joanna Loved Me; Polka Dots And Moonbeams* (alternate version); *Samba Cantina; Bossa Antigua; Samba Cepeda; A Ship Without A Sail; The Night Has A Thousand Eyes; O Gato* (alternate version); *Any Other Time; The Girl From East 9th Street; Curacao Doloroso; O Gato; Stranger In Town; By The River Saint Marie; Glad To Be Unhappy; Hi-Lili, Hi-Lo; Easy Living; All Across The City; Bewitched* (alternate version); *All Through The Night; I've Grown Accustomed To Her Face; Here's That Rainy Day; Bewitched.*
Personnel: *Desmond, alto saxophone; Jim Hall, guitar; Percy Heath, George Duvivier, Gene Cherico, Gene Wright, bass; Conny Kay, drums.*

★ ★ ★ ★

Whether we like to admit it or not, the '50s ushered in a wider split between black and white approaches to jazz than had ever existed before in our music's history. During the early- and mid-'20s, even the most inventive and innovative white musicians—Roppolo, Rollini, Beiderbecke, Teagarden, Teschemacher, Russell, Goodman—looked first to the black New Orleans masters for their tutelage in this new art. As Mezz Mezzrow reputedly reminded his fellow Chicagoans repeatedly, "The only real jazz is black jazz. Study Oliver and Jelly Roll and Louis and Bessie and Dodds, and forget the rest. Stay pure."

It was little different in the '30s and '40s, when the best bands and the best soloists were either black, or whites intensely dedicated to the principles of "le jazz hot." But this was to change drastically during the years

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 32

with three new cuts added, one from each of the three sets of personnel that made up the original *Triple Play* concept. There's a lot of variety here. Hodges is gorgeous on a grand scale, even when he whispers, and no one outswings him on the sprints. Among the other pleasures are relatively rare solo rations to Harry Carney, Hodges on *The Very Thought Of You*, and Buster Cooper's salty solo on *Money On A Limb*, a performance that atones somewhat for his blustery balladeering on *Nearness Of You*. Roy Eldridge is not quite up to form to my ears. Others on hand include Paul Gonsalves, Hank Jones, Lawrence Brown, Tiny Grimes, and Gus Johnson.

Shorty Rogers' light, pastel big band swing of the early '50s became the embodiment of what they used to call West Coast jazz. And despite the LP era, he turned out a lot of neat little three-minute performances that often swung irresistably. Thirty-two of them are on *Short Stops* (RCA/Bluebird, 59°7-1-RB), made up essentially of Rogers' first three Victor LPs, plus four cuts composed for the Marlon Brando picture *The Wild One*. (Incredibly, a gang of motorcycle thugs were supposed to be jazz buffs; but then in the early '50s jazz of this sort was the epitome of hipness and coolness. Thus, the connection.) The first side are nonets with particularly strong trombone by Milt Bernhart. Rogers, though a solid trumpeter, never dominated his groups. The big band cuts on side two are full of soft shadows from the Second Herd. It's unclear whether Rogers did all the arranging; Jimmy Giuffre may have had a hand too. The vocabulary of voicings and devices are quickly evident to the point of cliché; observe the intros to *Coop de Graas, Short Stop,* and *Boar-Jibu,* for instance. Yet, it all has such a lovely surge—ensembles and solos alike—it's still a pleasure. And where else are you going to hear a four baritone sax section (*Sigmund Freud*)? Most interesting, though, is the West Coast veneer Rogers gives a flock of pre-Hefti Basie staples. With a reed section full of little Lester Youngs, the band turns numbers like *Tickletoe, Taps Miller, It's Sand, Man, Doggin' Around,* and *Swingin' The Blues* into airy, reedy souffles that will fascinate and delight Basie fans. Shelly Manne's drumming, incidently, is right in the Jo Jones pocket. **db**

following WWII, years which were to reflect the changing tastes and values that are now best exemplified by the emergence and ultimate in-group acceptance of Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, and Bud Powell as being that generation's most overwhelmingly potent spokesmen. Their music was, among many other good things, almost unnervingly hot to most white sensibilities, so much so that there was bound to be a backlash in the offing.

What developed in antithesis to the seemingly savage intensity of bebop at its best was a counter-revolution set off by men of cooler temperaments and less voracious musical appetites than Bird, Bud, the Sonnys, and Klook. It was a movement that soon captured the attention of a public ready for respite from blazing altos, screaming trumpets, honking tenors, percussive pianos, and turbulent, madding drums. In short, it was a time ready for the laidback, reflective ruminations of such new groups as the Mulligan Quartet, the MJQ, the Shorty Rogers and Art Pepper combos, and, most relevantly, the Dave Brubeck Quartet.

Then as now, everyone knew that the altoman with Brubeck represented a startling, if soft-spoken, departure from the definitive incandesces of Parker. First of all, he was quiet. His sound, almost classical in its purity, carefully avoided the excesses of vocalic expression so common to most black, or black-inspired, blues-based white jazzmen of past or present. Always in control, perennially unruffled, bespectacled, witty, and urbane, Paul Desmond presented a protypical public image that was in diametric opposition to that usually associated with jazz musicians. He was, quite reassuringly to all newly curious about modern jazz, a gentleman—and a literate one to boot.

But beyond the superficialities, Desmond's then popularity and his still lingering appeal to serious listeners owe their true debt to his superior musical intuition, his unflappable taste, and a sense of melodic structure that finds its roots far more in the cyclically phrased improvisations of Frank Trumbauer and Benny Carter than they do in the more immediate and certainly more heated statements of Parker. Desmond was truly an original, and a very rebellious one as well, for he saw no reason to try to alter his own innate sensibilities so as to become one more member of the growing Bird herd. Of his closest peers, it might be said that Art Pepper swung harder and that Lee Konitz was the more experimental, but when the award is given for consistency in tasteful control and boundless lyrical imagination within proscribed limitations of tempo, volume, and mood, that award must be given to Paul Desmond.

Mosaic, in a long overdue tribute to one of the best matched pairs in jazz history, has here brought together the entire existing collection of recordings made by Desmond and guitarist Jim Hall. This collection consists primarily of four albums from RCA Victor (LSP 2569, *Take Ten*; LSP 3320, *Bossa Antiqua*; LSP 3407, *Glad To Be Unhappy*; LSP 3480, *Easy Living*), one from Warner Brothers (WS 1356, *First Place Again!*), and one track, *Susie*, from the Warner Brothers date that appeared only on a very rare Playboy LP (1959-C, *Playboy Jazz Allstars Album, Volume 3*). Alternate versions of titles (those recorded at different sessions), alternate takes (those recorded at the same sessions, i.e., *El Prince*), and previously unissued titles are also included.

If memory recalls correctly, there was at least one critic from the past who referred to Desmond's tone as one that resembled the pitiable whimperings of "a little girl lost." But perhaps this is a mistaken attribution. Perhaps that critic was actually referring to Stan Getz's "emasculated pipings" of the same era. So much for the critics!

—jack sohmer

Waxing On

THE PRODIGY GENERATION

DONALD HARRISON/TERENCE BLANCHARD: *Crystal Stair (Columbia 40830)* ★★★★
OUT OF THE BLUE: *Live At Mt. Fuji (Blue Note 85141)* ★★★½
METROPOLITAN BOPERA HOUSE: *Formidable (V.S.O.P. 50)* ★★★
SECOND SIGHT: *Flying With The Comet (Sunjump 01)* ★★★
RICKY FORD: *Looking Forward (Muse 5322)* ★★★★★
BOBBY WATSON: *Rount Trip (Red 187)* ★★★★
RALPH MOORE QUARTET: *623 C Street (Criss Cross Jazz 1028)* ★★★½
GARY THOMAS: *Seventh Quadrant (Enja 5047)* ★★★½
BILL EASLEY: *Wind Inventions (Sunnyside 1022)* ★★★½
WALLACE RONEY: *Verses (Muse 5335)* ★★★½
CURTIS LUNDY: *Just Be Yourself (New Note 1003)* ★★★½
CHARNETT MOFFETT: *Net Man (Blue Note 46993)* ★★
BERT SEAGER JAZZ QUINTET: *Time To Burn (Antilles 7086)* ★★★
MAKOTO OZONE: *Now You Know (Columbia 40676)* ★★
MARVIN "SMITTY" SMITH: *Keeper Of The Drums (Concord Jazz 325)* ★★★★
STEVE COLEMAN AND FIVE ELEMENTS: *World Expansion (JMT 870010)* ★★★½
GERI ALLEN: *Open On All Sides In The Middle (Minor Music 1013)* ★★★★
GREG OSBY AND SOUND THEATRE: *Greg Osby And Sound Theatre (JMT 870011)* ★★★½
MICHELE ROSEWOMAN: *Quintessence (Enja 5039)* ★★★★

The post-bop modernism style of jazz, to judge from its present semi-popularity and the large amounts of artistic wealth contained in the music, enjoys robust health. Swinging *young* players are largely responsible. Wynton Marsalis, without question the most prominent prodigy, and an increasing number of less celebrated marvels show great respect for their jazz pedigree, especially their bebop and improvising-on-modes progenitors, while each industriously devotes himself or herself to the development of a distinctive performance choice. They know that to have one's own dialect of the no-nonsense jazz language is to attain the peak of personal satisfaction—and to achieve artfulness.

The young lions, most of whom are under

age 30, primarily den in the boroughs of New York City, where they often tussle on club bandstands. A pack of them received their introduction to the real world of jazz—the feral, soulful regions of the mainstream—as part of Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers, a venerable place to spend time. Some have increased their creative roars alongside such notables as Betty Carter, Jack DeJohnette, Johnny Griffin, Roy Haynes, Dave Holland, Woody Shaw, and Jack Walrath.

Discussed here are 19 albums belonging to members of the prodigy generation. The majority of these recorded efforts are likely to stand the test of time for their intrinsic musical worth, becoming treasured someday as remarkable early markers in certain musicians' routes to eminence. (Only a handful may suffer the fate of eternal out-of-print oblivion.) So hear a bit of the promising future now. . . .

Two years after leaving the Messengers, alto saxophonist **Donald Harrison** and trumpeter **Terence Blanchard** prove on fourth outing *Crystal Stair* that their technical skills are growing at a rate commensurate with their deepening of feelings. Harrison's horn is here keen and limber in its attack, sure in its emotional thrusts, true to the evidencing of his budding maturity and conviction; yet on the album he often sets aside the alto in favor of tenor, soprano, and C Melody saxes, which are played well but without the insight brought to his primary reed instrument. Blanchard, a more sentient if less adventurous musician than his partner, turns in several excellent performances whether ruffling or cherishing song themes, taking after Freddie Hubbard and Miles Davis in certain stylistic/historical respects but never to a self-stifling point. Harrison and Blanchard are both commendable composers, and they use a solid, driving rhythm section consisting of youthful cohorts Cyrus Chestnut on piano, Reginald Veal on bass, and Carl Allen on drums.

Out Of The Blue's *Live At Mt. Fuji* captures the hard-swinging confederation of six striplings in concert at the base of the prodigious Nipponese natural wonder immediately before the splendid alto player Kenny Garrett left the fold (late summer 1986). OTB ebulliently re-explores previously recorded originals on this third offering, loosening the ties and unbuttoning the jackets that are customary garb for them and many other serious young musicians. Highlights include Garrett's hellfire fraught-with-ideation choruses on *Nathan Jones* and the funky bop esprit de corps of *OTB*. Also noteworthy is pianist Harry Pickens' adroit interpretation of Bud Powell's *Blue Pearl*, on which he gets pushed by the more-than-able pair of drummer Ralph Peterson and bassist Kenny Davis. Someone is heard to exlaim "Yeah!" at one point in the set—an apt summation.

The **Metropolitan Bopera House**, a Big Apple quintet with but one member on the low side of 35 (pianist Tardo Hammer), revitalizes such dusty hard bop tunes as Hank Mobley's *The Opener*, J. R. Monterose's *Mark V*, and Walter Bishop Jr.'s *Formidable*—the last serving as album title of their second date. Alto player Gary Pribek, once with Buddy Rich, and trumpeter John Marshall, an associate of Mel Lewis, competently handle the chestnut themes, expressing enough solo individuality amid references to storied bop figures to make the fiery and bluesy proceedings more than a celebratory throwback. Leader/drummer Danny D'Imperio, who worked with Woody Herman and Maynard Ferguson, sees to it that the pulse never lags.

As is the case with MBH, the **Second Sight** sextet is little known outside New York. Their debut *Flying With The Comet* evinces the great enthusiasm and fair skills of the ensemble when evoking an updated '60s modernism on a program made up of four unexceptional songs from the pen of leader/pianist John Esposito and a long hot-vamp number conceived by the Coltrane-influenced group saxophonist Jeff Marx. Featuring a thrifty, direct approach apparently nurtured in recent stints with Horace Silver, trumpeter Dave Douglas offers improvisations throughout the album that advance his grasp of nuanced emotions, tempo, and dynamics. Douglas soars best.

For some 10 years, **Ricky Ford** has been one of our premier tenor sax players, making his mark as both an urgent-sounding leader and a sideman with the likes of Charles Mingus and Abdullah Ibrahim. Also an impressive composer, Ford accentuates the breadth of his gifts on *Looking Forward*. Ford originals *Back*

To America and *Onward Forward*, which mirror his deep respect for the black South African people, are musically enthralling due to his deft tenor statements and his majestic charts for middle-aged worthies James Spaulding (flute, alto sax), John Sass (tuba), Kirk Lightsey (piano), Cecil McBee (bass), and Freddie Waits (drums). The material is of varied moods and colors, from the melodious *Living Doll*, with its swinging ensemble parts and effulgent solos, to the dark, edgy harmonic seesaw entitled *Supra Changes*. Ford's version of Duke Ellington and Juan Tizol's *Conga Brava* merit special citation.

Bobby Watson, the former Messenger and longtime unsung hero, spent time in Italy in 1985, recording *Round Trip* (and the earlier issued *Appointment In Milan*) in the company of a decent Milanese group known as the Open Forum Trio. With fertile imagination Watson guides his (mostly) straightahead, yearning alto sax through a captivating program of Ornette Coleman's *Round Trip*, Bill Evans and Miles Davis' *Blue In Green*, and two numbers penned within the quartet. He expresses wisdom and passion. It's of no great harm that Watson's accompanists sometimes appear emotionally distant.

Younger saxophonist **Ralph Moore**, who may be best known for his involvement with Freddie Hubbard, takes wing on initial feature outing *623 C Street*, manifesting a strong sense of phrasing and direction during flight. His tenor frequently has a dry and light tone though it can darken and get weighty. Moore sounds most inspired on Wayne Shorter's *Black Diamond* and Bud Powell's *Un Poco Loco*; he uses soprano convincingly on the graceful ballad *Christina*, a song written by sessionmate Buddy Williams. Billy Hart on drums and Williams on bass—no kids—contribute acceptable work and fresh face David Kikoski on piano goes about searching for his own musical identity.

Another as yet unheralded tenor saxophone force is **Gary Thomas**, a habitué of Baltimore and Washington jazz clubs and a cohort of Jack DeJohnette and Miles Davis. His first showcase, *Seventh Quadrant*, brims with vitality of the strikingly earnest sort. Indeed he swings hard, ordering his thorny phrasings through a probing intelligence, as drummer Jeff Watts (a Wynton Marsalis associate), bassist Anthony Cox, pianist Renee Rosnes, and D.C. guitarist Paul Bollenback—youngbloods all—stand their ground on a volcanic hot array of Thomas numbers and non-originals. The drama unfolded by the group in Terri Lyne Carrington's *The Eternal Present* is especially engrossing.

Bill Easley serves notice with *Wind Inventions* that he belongs to the vanguard of present-day exponents of the clarinet. Possessing the nature of a bopper enamored of swing, the New Yorker journeys into the instrument's upper and chalumeau registers with confidence, all the while keeping his impulses sharp; not surprisingly, he has a richer and fuller sound in the clarinet's low ranges. On an appealing blend of originals and Ellingtonia, Easley gets fine support from Victor Gaskin on bass and young players Tony Reedus on drums and ex-Messenger Mulgrew Miller on piano.

Wallace Roney's *Verses*, his first recording with top billing, has the former Messengers trumpeter aligning impressive technical ability with copious inventiveness on two good self-penned blues, Tony Williams' piquant *Lawra*, the lovely *Blue In Green*, and a pair of relentless post-bop tunes composed by one Cindy Blackman. Roney's lines glide effortlessly, full of meaning and suggestive of a deliberated fervency. His blowing session comrades are Gary Thomas, Mulgrew Miller, estimable drummer Tony Williams, and precocious bassist Charnett Moffett. (Roney and the last three belong to the Tony Williams Quintet.) Thomas' tenor is a gale wind, making an agreeable contrast to the trumpet's fresh breeze, and Miller's piano exhibits his exceptional way with harmony. Williams and Moffett don't disappoint.

Just Be Yourself places nominal date leader and talented bass player **Curtis Lundy** alongside longtime collaborator Bobby Watson, ageless piano wonder Hank Jones, young drummer Kenny Washington, and promising vibraphonist Steve Nelson. Lundy stays within the ensemble sound, stepping forward only on his witty *Jabbo's Revenge*, but he's not a shrinking violet: his big, well-deep rumbles are felt everywhere and his constant expressiveness goads the others into using their most fluent and imaginative mainstream language. Such speech is heard on the high-grade repertoire numbers and songs written by either Watson or Nelson. Carmen Lundy, the singing sibling of Curtis, makes two pleasing appearances.

Charnett Moffett's *Net Man* gives us glimpses of the superb 20-year-old jazz bassist we know from his work with Wynton Marsalis, Tony Williams, and others. Glimpses. *Softly As In A Morning Sunrise* and *Swing Bass*, the former with his father Charles (the onetime Ornette Coleman sideman) on drums, best evidence his mature technique, his cavernous thump, his swinging. Elsewhere *Net Man* affords us long looks at Moffett the would-be pop star. Now and then charming, yes, but when he snuggles up to synthesizers the mawkishness is intolerable.

With *Time To Burn*, the **Bert Seager Quintet** of Boston presents a good straightahead blowing date that has a soulful bop liveliness reminiscent of what Art Blakey and comrades always bring forth. Seager is but a moderately forceful pianist, favoring temperance over fiery excess when taking solos and comping on six of his own structurally interesting compositions. The youngish pianist is on close terms with his group members, sharing a warmth of feeling which arises from frequent work together. The late saxophonist Jimmy Mosher, who worked with the Buddy Rich and Woody Herman bands, spins improvisatory tales worth hearing. So does trumpeter Tim Hagans, a former Stan Kenton sideman.

Makoto Ozone's *Now You Know* reveals

what has been clear for some time: the Gary Burton Quintet pianist brings a romantic streak and an affinity for classical music to his jazz performances. His right hand proceeds in stiffly formal and precise fashion, bringing forth sweet nothings in *You Are In Love* and wishy-washy sentiment in *Might As Well*. Three songs decorated by flute player Steve Kujala also are of affectedly refined emotional content. Guitarist John Abercrombie, bassist Marc Johnson, drummer Peter Erskine, and Ozone himself on occasion show jazzy life (*Little Piggy*, *As Is*), but one comes away from the record thinking of Ozone's dryly elegant piano.

Marvin "Smitty" Smith's *Keeper Of The Drums* might also be titled "Keepers Of The Hard Bop Flame" since the highly sought-after drummer (David Murray's Big Band, Dave Holland Quintet, etc.) and a half-dozen prodigies pledge allegiance to the Blakey legacy when performing Smith-composed and -arranged blues, ballads, and song-sprints. Steve Coleman and Ralph Moore on saxes, Wallace Roney on trumpet, and Robin Eubanks on trombone deliver solo and ensemble remarks built of freshly conceived ideas and melodic suppleness. The passionately involved drummer, aided by Messengers alumni Mulgrew Miller on piano and Lonnie Plaxico on bass, directs the soloists' impulses. An altogether swinging, pleasure-giving date.

One wouldn't guess from listening to *Keeper Of The Drums* that "Smitty" Smith, Steve Coleman, Lonnie Plaxico, and Robin Eubanks belong to a free-spirited coterie of Brooklyn-based young jazz musicians who also look to rock, r&b, and world musics for further inspiration. (Smith, Coleman, and Eubanks also belong to the Dave Holland Quintet.)

Steve Coleman and Five Elements synthesize substantial jazz solos and voicings by front line hornmen Coleman (parched alto), Eubanks (trombone), and Graham Haynes (trumpet) with the sturdy funk of Kevin Bruce Harris (electric bass), Kelvyn Bell (electric guitar), and Mark Johnson (drums) on *World Expansion*, their second long-player. Keyboardist Geri Allen keeps busy amidst them all. Pop singer D. K. Dyson furnishes *Desperate Move* with street-life bluster, and the jazz-oriented vocalist Cassandra Wilson helps make *Dream State* memorable. (Elsewhere they have less presence.) Despite several lame tunes (e.g. *Tlydor's Bane*—with an ordinary rap), *World Expansion* should bewitch open-minded listeners.

On the strength of her first two albums, **Geri Allen** catapulted to the front row of the best low-aged pianists. Unlike its predecessors, *Open On All Sides* plays down her inventive-yet-tradition-bound piano in favor of her first-rate composing, arranging, mingling of pop and jazz notions, writing of lyrics (cheif concern: Mother Nature/Creative Muse), and ability to gather together empathic players (New York friends Coleman, Eubanks, percussionist Mino Cinelu, and several hometown Detroit musicians). Allen's set of 10 songs is unassailably imaginative and consistently beguiling, containing surprising melodies, rhythms (funk, latin, etc.), textures, orchestral hues, singing (by the otherworldly Shahita Nurallah), and so much else wonderment.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 62

(BLUE) NOTE-WORTHY

GIUSEPPE G. PINO

Hank Mobley: ". . . utterly personal."

As the lingering effects of the jazz reissue boom merge with the continuing CD phenomenon, record labels find themselves digging ever deeper into their vaults to unearth whatever dusty sessions they can Windex and slap onto a silver platter. And as more and more "product" appears on dealers' shelves it becomes increasingly difficult to determine which date is a forgotten masterpiece and which deserved its long night of neglect.

For many years previous, however, in the time before CDs proved it pays to look Back To The Future and issue material almost indiscriminately, there was a name which signified a quality record—one which could be guaranteed to provide a substantial musical experience, in clear, ungimmicked sound. That name was Blue Note—a label which eventually assumed a legendary status, thanks to an honor roll of creative musicians, and owners who were wise enough to give them the freedom to create virtually without commercial restraint. From its inception in 1938, Blue Note could be said to have defined—if not outright caused—at least three of jazz's most important evolutionary steps: the boogie-woogie craze of the 1940s, post-Parker hard-bop, and the initial experiments of the '60s New Thing. Given the label's uniform quality in sound and style—directly attributable to Alfred Lion and Francis Wolff—collector's were (and still are) known to save and savor any and all discs bearing the Blue Note imprint. During its long and praiseworthy history, Blue Note was—and to many still is—quite probably the single most valued label in jazz.

So it should be no surprise that Blue Note CDs were among the most eagerly anticipated, once the new format took a toehold in the public's consciousness. As the label's CD catalog now nears or surpasses the century mark, I surveyed 20 or so that were of particular personal interest, or in some way exemplified Blue Note's high standards of artist and artistry.

Over the long run, the CD revolution's biggest benefit may be that it is able to refocus attention on musicians who were neglected or underrated the first time around, and reclaim the critical reputations and popularity they deserve. **Sonny Clark** is one such artist who never received his full due during his lifetime, but—a la Herbie Nichols—might be in line for a mass rediscovery. Often to be found as the keyboardist on a number of swinging sessions by other leaders, Clark has three of his own dates among the initial batch of Blue Note CDs. The earliest, *Sonny's Crib* (CDP 7 46819-2, 67:17 minutes) was a 1957 sextet outing especially notable for some energetic middle-period John Coltrane, Donald Byrd at his most pungent, and a pair of the leader's ingratiating themes surrounded by three curiously chosen "standards." (Included, as the playing time would indicate, are three alternate takes not orignally released on LP. Wherever possible, reissue series producer Michael Cuscuna has added acceptable alternates or other unreleased performances; but while their track record with such repackaging is far better than most labels, there are still a number of CDs with pitifully short playing times.)

Clark's next ('58) date, *Cool Struttin'* (CDP 7 46513-2, 63:45), exudes a Horace Silver-ish sensibility, with Art Farmer and Jackie McLean replacing Byrd and Coltrane, and Philly Joe Jones' sizzling cymbals bumping Art Taylor's bomb-dropping. *Royal Flush*, which didn't appear on the original LP, is the most memorable track of this sturdy, if not overwhelming, album. Clark's almost casual keyboard mastery can be best heard on *The Sonny Clark Trio* (CDP 7 46547-2, 49:04) from '57. Though in many ways a Bud Powell disciple, Clark was never one to flaunt virtuosity; what's communicated most is his ability to suggest inevitability rather than shockwaves. But he was far from reticent—hear the way he digs into Dizzy Gillespie's *Bebop* with relish and cunning.

Recorded less than a week after his trio date, Clark's talents as an accompanist come to the fore behind **Lee Morgan** on *Candy* (CDP 7 46508-2, 41:59). A showcase for the trumpeter's lyrical side—only Jimmy Heath's *C.T.A.* is a recognizable "jazz" swinger—some of the tunes are simply too sweet despite the sometimes audacious risks Morgan takes. For fans of trumpet prodigies, it's good to remember that Morgan was 20 at the time of this recording. Not to make comparisons, I'd nevertheless suggest that anyone who has purchased a Wynton Marsalis record in the last year should hear this, too.

Sonny Clark was known to be one of **Dexter Gordon**'s favorite musicians, and he recorded with Long Tall Dex on more than one occasion—most notably, *Go!* (CDP 7 46094-2, 37:50), an impressive outing for all participants. Clark gives the rhythm section a gutsy, soulful solidity, around which drummer Billy Higgins sprays accents. Dexter burns on the uptempo tunes, and his ballad playing is leaner than, say, Ben Webster's, without sacrificing romance or muscle. Gordon's "hard" tenor sound is unique—and is captured honestly by Rudy Van Gelder's recording. (Van Gelder should be lionized—pardon the pun—for his consistent engineering work on these recordings.) Yes, Dexter is masterful—and outrageous (a quote of the *Mexican Hat Dance* in *Love For Sale*?).

Dexter Calling . . . (CDP 7 46544-2, 43:13) is another quartet session without complimentary (or competing) frontline horn. The pianist this time around is Kenny Drew, whose light, lucid, laidback presence contrasts with the high-powered program and Dex's aggressive stance. In addition, Gordon's sound is more robust and warmer—was a bit of artificial echo added? On *Our Man In Paris* (CDP 7 46394-2, 50:13)—the only of these not engineered by Van Gelder—his tone is even more quirky, rough and tough with edges other, less confident, tenormen might sand off. There's a bit too much echo on some songs, and Bud Powell's piano is fuzzy at times; still, his inventiveness shines through. Kenny Clarke's crisp, exacting divisions of the beat are propulsive, glowing, flowing. All three of these Gordon quartet CDs are essential listening.

Among the most famous pianoless recordings (with Gerry Mulligan and Ornette Coleman's quartets, respectively) are *A Night At The Village Vanguard Vols. 1* and *2* (CDP 746517-2, 57:46 and CDP 7 46518-2. 69:20) by **Sonny Rollins**. Though recombined into chronological order, we still have only two of the afternoon performances with Donald Bailey and Pete LaRoca, so the compilations are far from complete. Recorded on location, in mono, in 1957, the sound on CD is occasionally harsh and hard—Sonny's sax buzzes at times, and Elvin Jones' drums are muffled landmines—but it's honest and audible and who cares? Like many a great work of art these performances are intricate and obvious, messy and monumental. Some feel that despite the wealth of Rollins' on record, he never achieved these rarified heights again, and I'd be hard-pressed to argue.

To go from the weakest sounding Blue Note CD to perhaps the best sounding, you only need to hear **Eric Dolphy**'s *Out To Lunch* (CDP 7 46524-2, 42:33 and no new alternate takes, alas). This sounds vivid and vibrant, with Bobby Hutcherson's ringing vibes so sharp you could shave with them. The vibes are the crucial ensemble glue, with crisp chording and punctuating accents, though Richard Davis' bass is the foundation the adventurous soloists built upon—and every note, slide, slur,

and glide is perfectly audible. The unison and dialog passages between Davis and Dolphy's bass clarinet on *Something Sweet, Something Tender* are breathtaking. Even if you have this LP memorized, it will sound fresh and exciting on CD.

Dolphy's accompanying personnel on *Out To Lunch*—Freddie Hubbard, Hutcherson, Davis, and Tony Williams—were among the rotating cast which created some of Blue Note's—and the decade's—most electrifying, experimental music. Unfortunately, as of this writing none of Andrew Hill's impressive output has been remastered on CD. (Soon, please, with plenty of new alternates?) But a handful of the others have been. **Jackie McLean**'s 1962 quartet *Let Freedom Ring* (CDP 7 46527-2, 38:20) was one of the altoist's first exploratory steps and to my ears a problematic LP. In attempting to incorporate Ornette's freedom of conception and expanded range (of register *and* emotion), McLean's squealing seems forced, though his phrase-loosening is a plus. Billy Higgins' drumming—as McLean requires here—is more in-the-pocket than he provided at this time for Ornette, but even his incessant swinging can't prevent the treatment of Bud Powell's heartfelt *I'll Keep Loving You* from plodding.

The next year's *One Step Beyond* (CDP 7 46821-2, 46:57) found McLean and cohorts forging a unified ensemble conception much more flexible—and infinitely more valuable—for future concerns. As on the subsequent *Out To Lunch*, Hutcherson's vibes are the fulcrum on which much of this pianoless quintet balances. McLean sounds best (most energetic and inspired) on *Blue Rondo*, the date's most boppish line. Tony Williams' drums are a treat throughout—with a much lighter touch than he uses today—and are upfront soundwise, too. Perhaps the brightest soloist, though, is trombonist Grachan Moncur III (and let's hope that his two, important albums, *Evolution* and *Some Other Stuff*, are reissued quickly).

Bobby Hutcherson as leader is represented by a pair of CDs of varying style and substance. *Dialogue* (CDP 7 46537-2, 45:30) dates from '65—possibly the heyday of this group of experimentors, being also the year of release of Tony Williams' seminal free session, *Spring* (CDP 7 46135-2) and Herbie Hancock's equally influential, impressionistic *Maiden Voyage* (CDP 7 46339-2)—and features Hubbard, Andrew Hill, Richard Davis, Joe Chambers, and Sam Rivers. Though the material (penned by Hill and Chambers, respectively) has its high and low points, it's what the ensemble makes of it that's important—often utilizing a floating, dissipating rhythm (even when a foundation is stressed, as in Chambers' emphasis on martial rolls on *Les Noirs Marchant*) and a freer group interplay which allows for spontaneously generated details dictating overall shape—both of which still sound fresh and exciting today.

Hutcherson's '66 quartet, *Happenings* (CDP 7 46530-2, 44:05) unfortunately hasn't aged as well, being primarily a mainstream showcase for the vibist's melodic side. All of the material is more traditionally composed, save the freely conceptual *The Omen*.

Similarly uneven are a pair of **Freddie Hubbard** CDs. The first, *Hub-Tones* (CDP 7 46507-2, 38:55), is from 1962, when Freddie was 24 years old but totally in control of his remarkable chops. Witness the two sides of his personality: the title tune opens with a jerky head but soon kicks into quicksilver tempo and exploits careening lines and roman candle bursts; elsewhere on *Lament For Booker* (for deceased trumpet pal Booker Little) his solo is inventive but restrained and deeply felt—a model of sustained mood. Little else on the program reaches these inspired heights, but there are no real lows—and James Spaulding's always pungent alto playing is ever a boon. Likewise, *Blue Spirits*' (CDP 7 46545-2, 62:15) unevenness can be attributed to its anthology-like feel—it's made up of three separate sessions from '65 and '66. Hubbard's compositional efforts are ambitious but unfocused and structurally gawky, thanks to an expanded frontline that allows multi-sections, riffing, and little regard for polyphony. There are some strong solos by Hubbard, Spaulding, and Joe Henderson if you're patient, however, and one cut, *True Colors*, is a fascinating if failed experiment in exotic colors, timbres, and free phrasing.

Hubbard's fellow frontlinemate in the early '60s Jazz Messengers, **Wayne Shorter**, was meanwhile exploring a different set of compositional and interpretive values at this time. Though continuously trying to strip his tenor sax of the almost unavoidable Coltraneisms heard often on *Juju* (CDP 7 46514-2, 42:08), the comparison was re-emphasized by the rhythm section he chose to work with: McCoy Tyner, Reggie Workman, Elvin Jones—Coltrane sidemen all. Paradoxically, Shorter's phrasing is most original when it is most fragmented, insecure, or sardonic. But the intelligence of the compositions elevates this effort above the run-of-the-mill. Shorter's valuable next step—recorded just four months later in '64—was to substitute Herbie Hancock and Ron Carter for Tyner and Workman. The resultant *Speak No Evil* (CDP 7 46509-2, 42:16) furthered Shorter-the-composer's development of themes ranging from total (yet not naive) innocence to almost demonic (though not chaotic) intensity. If there is a caution about Shorter's work here it is not uncertainty, but a considered scrutiny of the many directions in which the material could evolve (thus Hancock's somewhat ambiguous harmonic support is more appropos than Tyner's single-minded strength).

Adam's Apple (CDP 7 46403-2, 48:24) is not the complete breakthrough, but a success nevertheless. Joe Chambers' drumming is aggressive, driving the music with unexpected accents and a different sense of swing than Elvin Jones' dispersed rhythm. And Shorter's playing by early '66 (consider the time spent with Miles up to this point, too) is now beautifully mature, memorable. The composing shines brightest, though; the themes are accessible but invariably intricate (thus finding favor among musician *and* listener alike). An especially attractive release from one of the shining lights of the Blue Note catalog.

cd reviews

Another of the label's shining lights has not maintained the consistent popularity which Shorter has, and as a result **Hank Mobley** is my second candidate for rediscovery. Many writers have proposed reasons for Mobley's unwarranted neglect; it's safe to say that his versatility may have appeared to be amorphousness instead. While perhaps lacking the unself-conscious flash of other, more superficial players, he could nevertheless ride a soulful backbeat with rigor and, more importantly, trace delicate latticework over the most intricate of chord changes with equal aplomb.

The Hank Mobley Quintet (CDP 46816-2, 57:20) is from '57 (that's over 30 years ago, remember) but sounds serviceable save for one of Art Blakey's cymbals, which sizzles with an annoying resonance. The ensemble (Art Farmer, Horace Silver, Doug Watkins, and Blakey—with the exception of Farmer, this *was* the original co-op Jazz Messengers) seems near breakdown at times (*Wham And They're Off* is a prime example) but they hang on by their nails to finish together. It's far from today's pasteurized perfection, and all the more exciting for it. Mobley, too, reflects similar characteristics. You hear his lagging rhythm (why do critics keep pushing Charlie Parker as his main influence, when I hear so much Lester Young?) and wait for him to fumble, to falter, and he doesn't—and his inventiveness in the face of it all is marvelous. Mobley's playing on *Fin De L'affaire*, for example (the melody calls to mind *You Don't Know What Love Is*, appropriately enough), is utterly personal. Of the others, the pre-flugelhorn Farmer's trumpet is incendiary trading fours on *Startin' From Scratch*, and Silver's minimalism makes Basie seem positively verbose. The tunes, all Mobley originals, are vaguely familiar, as if built from bits and pieces of recognizable standards.

Soul Station (CDP 7 46528-2, 37:29) is often cited as one of Mobley's recorded triumphs, and rightfully so. Though the sound isn't top-notch (there's a touch of unnecessary echo around the tenor, and a few times it sounds as if he wasn't in the same room as the rhythm section) you can't grumble about the music—every note is square on-target, and the quartet (Wynton Kelly, Paul Chambers, and Blakey) creates a perfectly balanced equation: if one component were altered or removed, the structure would collapse. An essential release.

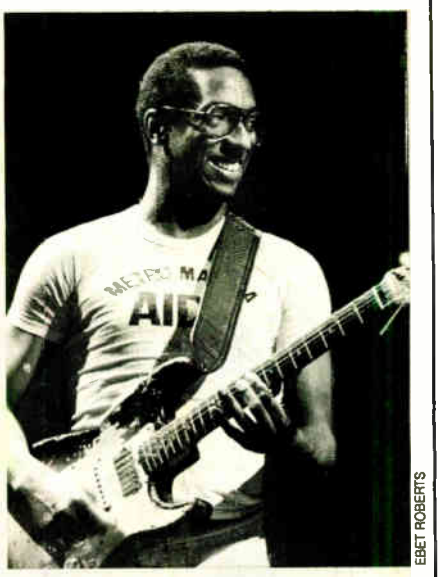
Nine months later (Nov. 1960) Freddie Hubbard joined this quartet for *Roll Call* (CDP 746823-2, 52:06). The energy is cranked up a notch (hear Blakey bashing away on the title tune for a strong influence on today's Andrew Cyrille), Mobley's tone and temperament seem harder-edged (aided by a better recording?), and Hubbard's youthful enthusiasm is a tonic. If his exuberance sometimes throws him out of control, still these are the sort of gunslinger sessions which made his early reputation. Finally, *Dippin'* (CDP 7 46511-2, 41:38) makes a few qualified concessions to the times (the soul-jazz remnants of '65), though pianist Harold Mabern's heavily articulated chording and funky demeanor cannot smother his spirited, sparkling lines and propulsive push. If not the sophisticated success of some of Mobley's earlier dates, perhaps Blue Note will let us have the complete *Workout* session soon, in order to help open a few more ears to one of the glories of jazz.

—art lange

HIRAM BULLOCK

by Gene Santoro

Hiram Bullock does an awful lot of different things with the guitars he totes from studio to studio around the Apple. A consummate sideman (with credits from every corner of the jazz and pop worlds) who can fill a slot with just what's needed to make a track do what it's supposed to, he can also tear up a club stage with the kind of reckless abandon audiences love while burning up his strings—as folks who've stopped in to see him play with Gil Evans on Monday nights at Sweet Basil, or who caught him during the early days of the David Letterman show, can attest. His second solo LP, *Give It What U Got* (Atlantic 7 81790-1), was released this winter. This was his first Blindfold Test.



1 CHARLIE CHRISTIAN.

Rose Room (from The Genius Of The Electric Guitar, Columbia Jazz Masterpieces). Christian, guitar; Benny Goodman, clarinet; Lionel Hampton, vibes; Fletcher Henderson, piano; Artie Bernstein, bass; Nick Fatool, drums.

I would guess that's Charlie Christian. I'm not real familiar with his style, but I guessed that because in that era of swing there weren't that many guys who could solo, actually play; the guitar was still mostly a four-to-the-bar rhythm instrument. One thing that strikes me on hearing it is the connection between that and what became rock & roll guitar playing, especially because they're playing over one chord. It's a little more linear, a little more single-note-oriented, but in the sound of what he's playing, and even the basic feel, it reminds me of rock & roll guitar playing. If you take what he did and make it a lot cruder you come up with early rock & roll. One other thing about that music is that you can hear people were having a ball—people jitterbugging, grooving. I like that in any kind of music.

2 JOE PASS. *Body And Soul (from University Of Akron Concert, Pablo). Pass, guitar.*

I think that's Joe Pass. I give it 900 stars [*laughs*]. Whenever I hear that stuff, it makes me want to sit down and play the guitar; *that's* really guitar playing, it shows an extremely high level of the guitar as an instrument. It's not like listening to Segovia. It's a step further for me, because it's not written, it's just a guy sitting there playing off the top of his head. I mean, I'm sure there are some things he does over and over, but it's pretty loose. At one point in my sketchy musical education I had to transcribe some of those solo things off his *Virtuoso* record, which is why I recognized him: there's a certain style he has to his solo playing. But he really is among the most fluid guitar players; it's not like he's just playing chords or single-string stuff, it's just whatever he feels.

3 JIMI HENDRIX. *Drifting (from The Cry Of Love, Reprise). Hendrix, guitar, vocal; Buzzy Linhart, vibes; Billy Cox, bass; Mitch Mitchell, drums.*

You surprised me by finding some Hendrix that I've never heard. Guess I didn't pay that much attention to that album. What are you gonna say about Hendrix? That was indicative of one of the styles he had, which is to me an r&b balance: a lot of those two-note sliding fills, those stock r&b things that he did so much with. Then there's his production values, which still, to me, sound totally current. They're 20 years old, but the only way you can tell that's an old record is the drum sound; everything else in there sounds like it was done tomorrow. Unbelievable. I don't know how he did it, especially that backwards-guitar sound—I've never heard anyone else do it the way he could. I almost get into a magical thing talking about Hendrix; it's beyond normal playing. He changed guitar playing in the sense that the guitar as an instrument never sounded like that before.

4 ALLMAN BROTHERS. *Don't Want You No More (from The Allman Brothers Band, Atco). Duane Allman, Dicky Betts, guitars; Gregg Allman, keyboards; Berry Oakley, bass; Butch Trucks, Jai Johnny Johanson, percussion.*

That was one of my favorite bands, the Allman Brothers. I doubt that you could find something *they* did that I haven't heard [*laughs*]. To me, they were the first fusion band. They were doing 22-minute instrumental tunes in the late '60s and people were listening to them. They were calling it rock, because they had long hair and were from the South, but in essence it was fusion. They were playing songs in odd-time signatures, for instance; everything that technically represents fusion they were doing. What can I say? I'm a fan. Quite frankly, I never felt that either Duane or Dicky were stellar guitar players—except when Duane played slide, which was unbelievable. He was great. The closest thing to that now is my friend Steve Morse, who took that Southern tradition—there *is* something Southern about the music, though I don't know what it is—and carried it farther intellectually.

5 BLUES BREAKERS. *Hideaway (from Blues Breakers, London). Eric Clapton, guitar; John Mayall, keyboards; John McVie, bass; Hughie Flint, drums.*

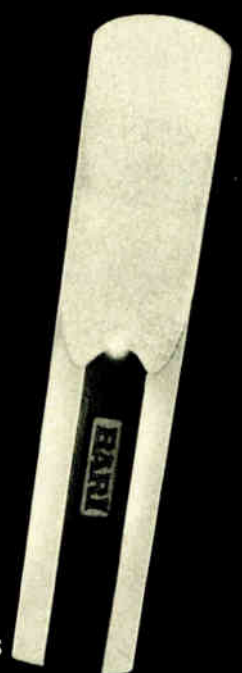
I'm in my blues blindness here—Blind Lemon Bullock [*laughs*]. I have no idea who it was.

GS: That was Clapton.

HB: That was Clapton? Sounded like one of the real cats. That was old, I guess. I didn't start listening to Clapton until around 1971, when he'd smoothed all that rawness out—he sounds young and real raw there. Funny thing was, it reminded me of what we do with Gil Evans, the way they had all those time changes—it was a blues, but they put it through every conceivable time feel. I never would've guessed that that was Clapton; it's his sound, but it's not the slicker feel I associate with him. That surprised me.

6 BILL FRISELL QUARTET. *Look Out For Hope (from Look Out For Hope, ECM). Frisell, guitar; Hank Roberts, cello; Kermit Driscoll, bass; Joey Baron, drums.*

Well, one of those people is Bill Frisell; it's impossible to miss him. He is one of my favorite players—there's nobody else like him. It's funny, because he's from Colorado, but when I listen to that kind of music it strikes me that it would only be in New York that people would play like that. Not even uptown, definitely downtown. It's so *weird*, it's full of all these bizarre elements. It's jazz, but it's not; his personal style has country elements, but also raunch; what can I say? Being a big fan of weird, I'm into it. **db**



FINAL BAR . . .

TOM COPI

Slam Stewart

instrument. Stewart achieved prominence in the late '30s when he teamed up with singer/guitarist Slim Gaillard to form the duo Slim & Slam. From there he went on to perform with such jazz greats as Erroll Garner, Charlie Parker, Art Tatum, and Benny Goodman, as well as leading his own small combos.

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David Lastie, jack-of-all-music New Orleans saxophonist, died there December 5 at age 54. Lastie belonged to one of the major New Orleans musical dynasties, epitomizing the transition from New Orleans r & b (his father was drummer Deacon Frank Lastie, and his uncle was Jesse "Ooo Poo Pah Do" Hill) to contemporary jazz (his nephew is drummer Herlin Riley, formerly with Ahmad Jamal). Long associated with Cosmo Studio in New Orleans, Lastie played on mainly r & b albums recorded there, backing, among others, Dr. John, Professor Longhair, Huey "Piano" Smith, Sonny Jones, Dave "Fat Man" Williams, and Smiley Lewis.

Harold Vick, tenor saxophone player, died of a heart attack in Manhattan November 12. He was 51. A native of Rocky Mount, North Carolina, Vick performed with such music greats as Shirley Scott, Jack McDuff, Dizzy Gillespie, and Aretha Franklin. He will be featured in an upcoming Spike Lee film entitled *School Days*.

• • •

Ted Taylor, Okmulgee, Oklahoma native r&b singer, died October 22 in an auto accident in Louisiana. He was 50. Known for his soaring vocal range and a trademark falsetto, Taylor switched from gospel to r&b in 1955, joining a vocal group variously billed as the Jacks, the Cadets, and the Rocketeers. Going solo in '57, Taylor made some fine blues and r&b for the Ebb firm in L.A. He eventually signed with Columbia's Okeh label in 1963. He went on to work in Chicago, Memphis, Muscle Shoals, and Nashville, recording for Atco, among others.

• • •

Billie (Tiny) Moore, accomplished mandolin and fiddler, died December 15 of a heart attack at the age of 67. Tiny was mostly known for popularizing the electric mandolin while playing with Bob Wills and his Texas Playboys in the '40s. In the late '70s and early '80s he was a regular with Merle Haggard's band, the Strangers. He also performed with his own band and recorded with such greats as Jethro Burns, Merle Haggard, and David Grisman with Stephane Grappelli.

Potpourri

Spring jazz: **Cuyahoga Community College**'s Jazzfest '88 will be held at multiple venues 4/14-23. "The nation's premier educational jazz festival" will include artists-in-residence **Gary Burton**, **Makoto Ozone**, **Al Gray**, and **Oliver Lake** . . . more jazz on campus: **George Wein** and the **Yale School of Music** will co-produce the second annual Yale Jazz Festival on 2/25-27. For more information call (203) 432-4157 . . . awards benefit: The Eleventh Annual **Bay Area Music Awards** will be held 3/12 at the San Francisco Civic Auditorium . . . for the record: the recent **Kitaro** feature in **db** (Jan. '88) lists some of his records being available as imports. Gramavision has released these same records here in the U.S. They are: *In Person*, *Tunghuang*, *Silk Road Volumes 1 & 2*, *Oasis*, *Kitaro Keepsake*, *Ki*, and *My Best* . . . a jazz treasure: both Houses of **Congress** have passed a resolution drafted by U.S. Rep. John Conyers of Mich., designating jazz "a rare and valuable national American treasure." The House of Representatives passed the bill last September; fellow Democrat, Alan Cranston of Calif., introduced it in the Senate, where it was passed in December . . .

MULGREW MILLER

A FORMER JAZZ MESSENGER NOW FORGING HIS OWN CAREER, THIS YOUNG PIANIST IS SPREADING HIS MESSAGE ACOUSTICALLY.

By Gene Kalbacher

Mulgrew Miller does *not* play the synthesizer. He plays the piano, period.

Miller, 32, has played the acoustic piano on three recordings under his own name (the latest being *Wingspan*, Landmark 1515), and his at-once earthy and orchestral touch on the ivories has, over a decade, enlivened the bands of Mercer Ellington, Betty Carter, Johnny Griffin, Woody Shaw, Art Blakey, and, most recently, Tony Williams. Yet instead of asking Miller why he plays the piano, journalists persist in asking him why he does *not* play the synthesizer. Patiently, though he obviously finds the topic a trifle tiresome, Miller answers the question with one of his own: "Should a professional bicycle racer also be expected to race motorcycles?"

To play or not to play the synthesizer—Miller doesn't ponder the question like a musical Hamlet. For Miller, the issue is not what one plays but *how* one plays it; not whether the musician plays piano or synth but whether or not the musician plays with imagination and feeling. The instrument is only the *means* of expression, he asserts, not the expression itself. "True possibility and expression come from within."

Miller, who lives in Newark, New Jersey, with his wife Tanya and son Darnell (another child is expected soon), emphasizes that he has no objection to synths, he simply has no interest in them as performing instruments. "Some of the synthesizers have good uses as compositional and arranging tools to help you to hear an ensemble or special kind of voice," he allows. "And they're valuable because of their portability. I have nothing *against* synthesizers; I like to hear people play them well."

Yet, according to the muscular 6-foot-2 inch pianist, synthesizers (and electronic instruments in general) can be "deceptive," even distracting. "Sometimes people think that when they have more volume, or when they have a pitch wheel to bend notes, they can put across more emotions. I can hear that to a point. The goal," he continues, "is for a person to find out how to express himself fully, how to free his imagination and bring across his feelings. To me, the problem, as it were, of musical expression is not external, is not about the instrument—it's an *inner* thing."

MITCHELL SEIDEL

For Miller, imagination is a matter of both inspiration and effort ("One of the characteristics of imagination is to take an idea and distort it, change it, turn it around"), both of which he demonstrated at an early age. One Sunday morning in the family house in Greenwood, Mississippi, a small Delta community, six-year-old Mulgrew sat down at the piano and began playing—by ear—the melody of a hymn he had heard in church, *Come Thy Fount Of Every Blessing*. That he played the entire tune on only the black keys made little difference; his musical aptitude was readily apparent to his parents, who arranged classical studies for the youngster.

Besides taking private piano lessons for 10 years, Miller played the Baldwin organ during church services nearly every Sunday for a decade until he joined the Mercer Ellington Orchestra in 1977. In fact, Miller got his professional start playing the music of Aretha Franklin, Al Green, and James Brown on combo organ with rhythm & blues bands in the late '60s and early '70s. It wasn't until 1973, when he attended Memphis State University and befriended pianist James Williams (whom he would later replace in the Jazz Messengers), that he concentrated on the acoustic piano and jazz theory. But while he was digesting all this newly acquired theory, he had another small obstacle to overcome: "I almost had to learn how to play the piano *all over again*!" he recalls. "When I was playing r&b on the Farfisa organ, I realized that some of the subtle possibilities of the piano were lost, and this was a limitation, but I could always cut through; the drums never drowned me out. I could always raise the volume. But with the acoustic piano, once you realize that you have to compete acoustically for sound [with the drummer], then you start losing technical control and you start playing harder, less relaxed. I had to learn how to control my technique with a drummer; I had to figure out how to get the maximum amount of sound with a minimum amount of effort."

In short, bereft of sheer electric power, Miller faced the challenge of overcoming the inherent limitations of the piano. Little did he know that within a decade he'd become a rhythm-section batterymate to two of the hardest-bashing, most percussively intricate drummers in jazz. "The piano is not like a trumpet or saxophone, where you can scream or bend notes," he remarks. "The acoustic piano player has to know how to make the instrument more dynamic, emotionally, within the group. If you notice, on a lot of early bebop records [of the '40s], whenever Charlie Parker or the trumpet player finished playing, the whole dynamic level of the group went down when the piano player started to play—though Bud Powell at his best was an exception. Later on, piano players became more aware of this and learned to project more dynamically. One of those players was Oscar Peterson. And *nobody* overwhelms Oscar Peterson. Even when he's playing onstage with a horn player, Oscar is not going to be dynamically overshadowed in the ensemble playing; it might even be the other way around."

Miller's stint from 1977-80 with the Duke Ellington Orchestra, directed by Mercer Ellington, the pianist's first major professional affiliation, did much to pique his imagination. "Duke's music was a world of colors and images," Miller marvels. "I realized that this man had a wild imagination—he lived in a musical fantasy world." After a short stay in vocalist Betty Carter's trio in 1980, Miller spent three productive years in the Woody Shaw Quintet, followed by nearly three more as a member of the Jazz Messengers, with whom he appeared on such recordings as *New York Scene* (Concord Jazz 256), *Live At Sweet Basil* (GNP 2182), and *Live At Kimball's* (Concord Jazz 307).

"Art Blakey has this expression, 'to go beyond the lights [of the stage],'" Miller reveals. "It refers to the importance of projection beyond the bandstand, and while he applied it to horn players, it has meaning for pianists, too." Miller's ability to project, dynamically, within the ensemble stood him in fine stead with the Jazz Messengers, but the pianist was quickly disabused of another notion by the formidable leader. "Art sharpened my awareness of rhythm-section functions," Miller notes. "With other groups I'd played in, free-lance groups, I always felt I needed to *direct* the rhythm section, pianistically; with my comping I thought I could pull the rhythm section along. I felt that whenever I wasn't comping—and this could've been my own immaturity—I wasn't doing my job. But I quickly found out you *can't* lead Art. I found that out *fast*."

With Tony Williams, who, like Blakey, "is one of the most dynamic drummers in jazz," according to Miller, he comps even less. Says the pianist, who has recorded two albums for Blue Note with Williams'

fivesome, "Tony's music is a lot freer harmonically [than Blakey's], so I don't have to dictate the harmonies as much as I did with Art."

Besides Peterson, the pianists who've made the deepest, most lasting impression on Miller are the orchestral, "expansive" players, among them Art Tatum, Erroll Garner, Ahmad Jamal, Herbie Hancock, and McCoy Tyner. Since his days with trumpeter Shaw, when the band's repertoire contained numerous modal works, Miller has been dogged by sylistic comparisons with Tyner, an identification that, once flattering, he now finds frustrating and restrictive.

Miller's new, third Landmark outing as a leader, *Wingspan*, his first non-trio affair, represents another step in what the pianist calls his "growing process." Spotlighting Miller's melodic affinities, to say nothing of his post-Tyner locutions, this quintet album (Kenny Garrett, alto sax; Steve Nelson, vibes; Charnett Moffett, bass; Tony Reedus, drums) is richly variegated in colors, styles, and structures, ranging from the title track, a boppish line dedicated to Bird, and *The Eleventh Hour*, a blues with a chromatic line, to *One's Own Room*, a tone poem built on a pedal point with free improvisation. Garrett, who shares the front line on *Wingspan* with surrogate hornman Nelson, extols the "sensitivity" of Miller, with whom he roomed from 1980-82. "He's always aware of what's happening, regardless of what's being played. He's *listening* along with you, not overplaying." Drummer Reedus, citing *Wingspan*'s wide-ranging compositions, adds, "His tunes come out of so many different bags that you really have to be versatile to go from one to another."

Miller, who expects to replace the Sohmer baby grand piano in his home with a Steinway soon, is looking forward to more work in Williams' quintet, additional gigging with his own group (which was warmly received by the critics at the Village Vanguard last August), and *fewer* questions about synthesizers. "It's not that I'm trying to *avoid* synthesizers," he maintains. "It comes down to this: Do I have imagination and can I set it free? Do I have a real *feeling* for the piano? Can I get a *sound*? Can I project? I love to play the piano, and it's important for me to play it with as much eloquence and beauty as possible." **db**

THE RADIATORS

THE BROTHERS MARSALIS AND NEVILLE AREN'T THE ONLY MUSICAL PRODUCTS TO ESCAPE FROM NEW ORLEANS OF LATE—AS THIS HARD-CHARGING ROCK SEXTET PROVES.

By Gene Santoro

Most bands that have been playing bars and clubs for a decade or more—if they survive that long—settle into a fairly predictable formula of immediate crowd-pleasers, thus sacrificing any chance at forging their own musical identity in favor of making it through another four- or five-set night on the bandstand. Not so coincidentally, they also—realistically—give up on one of rock & roll's most basic hopes, that the guy with the contract and blank dotted line will be out there in the audience some night, be blown away, and start them on the last leg of the road to, uh, overnight success.

The New Orleans sextet called the Radiators—Ed Volker on keyboards, Dave Malone and Camile Baudoin on guitars, Reggie Scanlon on bass, Frank Bua on drums, and Glenn Sears on percussion—who've been stewing the gumbo they call Fishhead Music for just over a decade now, did neither. In one of the occasional stories that reinjects the whiff of hope into rock's valleys of despair, they recently landed a contract and put out their major-label debut, *Law Of The Fish* (Epic 40888), when the youngest band member clocked in at 34 and the oldest at 40.

Not exactly prime time for rock & roll, eh? If they don't look like pop stars either, it's because they wear their tangled histories—which read more or less like hundreds of odysseys that began in the late '60s—like they wear their clothes and present themselves on stage, without pretension or fuss.

Their music is in the same bag. The grooves and hooks are often stamped with a New Orleans second-line pedigree, but there's a healthy leavening of late '60s sounds that filter those sources prismatically: the Grateful Dead and touches of laidback psychedelia, for instance, the ragged countrified harmonies of the Band, the Southern rock strains fathered by the Allman Brothers Band of the early '70s, and, more crucially, Little Feat's own Southern Cal take on the Crescent City Sound. The Radiators twin-guitar setup, which generally threads moving lines and figures around a lead rather than strictly divvying up the chores between chordwork and fills, clearly owes a great deal to all three of those progenitors. And also like those four bands, they know how to work live for all it's worth, milking a tune or a vibe until the audience peaks on it.

CHIP SIMONS

Those qualities, ironically enough, are among the reasons it took them until now to land a major-label deal. "The standard response when record company people would come to see us was, 'Y'all are great, but we don't have any idea how to sell you,'" says singer/guitarist Malone with some degree of satisfaction. "Now they don't seem to care about that any more. They're really keen on Fishhead music, whatever that is; it's just a feeling that goes through whatever we do. I mean, we have our own influences, and obviously a lot of them come from New Orleans. But there are tons of other things too. Like lately I've been listening to every-

thing from Peter Chase to Talking Heads to Louis Jordan." Songwriter/keyboardist/singer Volker puts in, "I'm big on Argentine tango music right now. I like William Schimmel's *Tango Project* a lot, and Astor Piazzolla's double live album. Wild stuff."

Which is not a bad description of their new Epic LP, *Law Of The Fish*. Raunchy and snarling guitars twine over the taut rhythm section's bouncy struts or swampy ballads and everything in between, while the gruff vocals by either Malone or Volker sing of lost loves and other bluesy staples. With the occasional and rewarding offbeat image: Volker, who dredges much of his material out of his dreams, has a knack for the startling, as in the Little Feat-ish cut called *Doctor Doctor* where he writes, "Ti Jean said the only real thing was to live and love in vain/Talk about the silence, and the pre-dawn firing squad/Last cigarette, never will forget that look on the face of God."

With a massive repertoire that may be topped only by Sleepy LaBeef's, the Radiators had to face the problem of culling a dozen tunes from a cast of hundreds and hundreds for *Law Of The Fish*, though it was nowhere near as difficult as it might have been. "We have a very dynamic repertoire—it's constantly shifting around, and we've forgotten more songs than we know," asserts Volker. "We get requests from fans for old songs we used to do that we don't even know how they go." Not always, though; sometimes a tune gets revived and rearranged. *Hard Time Train* from the new LP is one such instance. "This is the third go-round for that one," he grins. "It's come and gone a bunch of times, but I think we've finally got a handle on it. We kept having to redo the rhythms, which Glenn, the conga player [and the band's newest member, with only four years in group harness], really helps tie together. My using the Kurzweil 250 along with the piano gives it a lot of bottom and top too."

And so the actual tune selection went fairly easily. "There was a lot of consensus between ourselves and the folks at Epic that were handling us," says Volker. "So that wasn't so difficult. See, we wanted to have about 20 songs, and narrow that down to about 15, and then record them. That's what we did, including two versions of *Law Of The Fish*, so we still have two tunes in the can that we didn't think were quite at the level of the rest."

A bit more difficult was the transition from stage to studio, which not only requires a different way of working but a different way of thinking about the tunes themselves. "It was our first real studio endeavor," admits Malone, though the band has put out two self-produced LPs, one live and the other studio. "But having [producer/engineer] Rodney Mills there made all the difference. He really worked with us, was like one of the guys—just as crude as we are and with the same sick sense of humor," he laughs. "He had done the last Greg Allman album, so when he flew down to meet us, we just got along great."

ANDREW BOYD

Clockwise from top left: Dave Malone—guitar, vocals; Glenn Sears—percussion; Frank Bua—drums; Camile Baudoin—guitars, vocals; Reggie Scanlan—bass; Ed Volker—keyboards, vocals.

That made the actual recording process a lot easier, obviously. "We didn't record entirely live," explains Malone, and Volker continues, "In order to get the feeling, we did record everybody on just about every cut when we were doing the bottoms, with the idea that if we didn't have to do something over we wouldn't; we weren't looking to construct every song like an edifice on tape, in different layers. But mostly we recorded like that to get as good a feel as we could on the bass and drums. If we also saved little rhythm guitar parts, great, but mostly it was to make it comfortable for the rhythm section. We and Rodney were very meticulous about getting good performances on things, not just clean and perfect renditions of parts on each of the songs. So we had to balance the clean recording of it versus the feeling of the performance."

Malone picks up the tale: "There weren't a whole lot of takes of any one song. I mean, we've been playing together for so long, that the playing was there even if there were a few flubs that had to be fixed. The bottoms took about four days to do. The vocals were done separately, of course, which took the longest, a few days—I didn't even start doing vocals until the third week we were in the studio. The last bulk of the guitar solos took a couple of days too, and there were little bits and pieces that Rodney picked out—a bass track here, a couple of drum parts there—that had to be redone."

All told, the disc took four weeks from start to finish. Including editing things down, one of the key aspects of the transition from live shows, where the idea is to hook an audience on the groove and make 'em ride it for as long as possible, to tape, where the performance has to be more concise and controlled—especially if you want it to get radio play in these days of padlocked formats. As Volker himself notes, "Playing for 20 years, like I have, in the bar element, length is one thing that doesn't matter; but when you're making a record that you want to last for a certain period of time, you don't want it to use up all its time saying the same thing over and over. So you cut the verses that repeat, drop the chorus a couple of times, things like that." Malone cracks, "In the studio there was nobody there, no applause. Silence, and six people looking at each other. And Rodney would never say anything, except maybe, 'Oh, I guess you can come in [to the control room].' That would help, actually, because it kept us from getting too spunky about what we were doing." Back to Volker: "We'd have run through it three or four times, filled up a tape, then we'd go in the booth to listen and see what we had there. Rodney always liked to have at least two tries on there, just to have a perspective, to be able to balance the cleanliness of the rendition against the performance. It surprised us sometimes. We might have four run-throughs, and you would think after the last one, 'Ah, that was it,' but the first one would be much better."

As you might expect of any unit that's hung together as long as the Radiators have, they have evolved a more or less set method of approaching the basics of their craft, like writing and arranging. "The way it's been going," says Volker, "I'll assemble maybe 45 minutes or an hour's worth of material, then Dave and I get together and party and listen to it. He'll start getting into certain cuts, and we'll start getting a certain number of these tunes together and start learning them, just the two of us, figuring out who's gonna sing what. Then we bring them to the other guitar guys, and start focusing on what we're going to do as far as an arrangement, although sometimes we do the song just as I did it. Then we finally get with the drummers, it starts taking on some kind of total life." So they tend to learn Volker's tunes in bunches of fours and fives via this process. "Sometimes that turns it completely around," notes Malone. "Like the single, *Dreamers*, originally started out with the piano figure the way it does, but when we first heard the drum part Frank was gonna put on there it didn't sound like it would work at all—we'd thought of that part as straighter. But it works great."

"Sometimes," explains Volker, "the song structure itself will dictate the arrangement—there won't be much else the band can do except play it as it is. Other times it'll be really fleshed out by everybody putting their two cents in. So the arrangements come in many different ways; that's what I love about this group doing the songs I bring 'em, is that there's always going to be more to 'em than meets the ear." **db**

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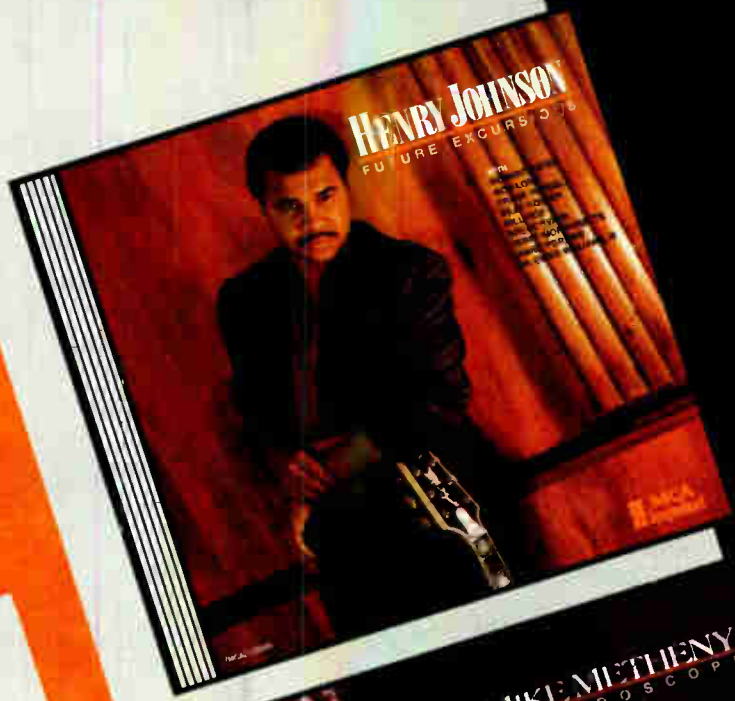

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JAZZ PIANO by Warren Bernhardt. Six one-hour tapes and 30-page booklet. Homespun Tapes, Box 694, Woodstock, NY. $65.

ARRANGING AND RECORDING ELECTRONIC KEYBOARDS by Vinnie Martucci. Six one-hour tapes and 88-page booklet. Homespun Tapes. $65.

BLUES/ROCK PIANO by David Cohen. Six one-hour tapes and 39-page booklet. Homespun Tapes. $65.

MASTER CLASS WITH WALTER BISHOP JR. One-hour VHS videotape. Jazz Video International, Suite 33-Q, 400 W. 43rd St., New York, NY 10036. $34.95.

Homespun has recently added two items to their catalogue: a jazz piano method by Warren Bernhardt and a synthesizer how-to by Vinnie Martucci. Each is a serious contribution to popular music pedagogy on audio tape. This review will also consider the David Cohen *Blues/Rock Piano* method, also from Homespun, but not new, as well as an instructional videotape by noted bebop pianist Walter Bishop Jr.

With the Bernhardt *Jazz Piano* method, Homespun departs from their usual practice of offering instructionial tapes on clearly defined subjects and ventures into the risky realm of trying to package an entire artform into six hourlong tape lessons. If you actually believe you can become an accomplished jazz pianist through this method *alone*, I have a brand-new bridge across the Mississippi River I'd like to sell you. Yet this seeming impossible project has become for Bernhardt the occasion for elaborating a rich and substantial body of ideas, more or less progressively ordered, culminating in valuable and practical insights into Bernhardt's own solid mainstream style. A beginning player would probably find this method quite frustrating after the introductory material. There is very little guidance concerning melodic construction beyond indicating the raw materials of scales and arpeggios and offering sample playing. Consult John Novello's *The Contemporary Keyboardist* (Source Productions, Los Angeles, 1985) for basic instruction here. Of course, Bernhardt offers the standard advice about listening and copying, but he does not systematically challenge the student to devise exercises and solve problems, and he seems to be unaware of many of the advances in jazz pedagogy. One is grateful, therefore when he recommends an exercise and warns the student not to go on until he has achieved a certain degree of mastery in it. But he does not do this once he has left the basics.

Bernhardt is very strong on certain aspects of jazz harmony and deals effectively with chord alterations, substitute chords, approach chords, pedal points, contemporary blues progressions, and the cycle of fourths. He offers many gorgeous sample passages, some of which are transcribed in the accompanying 30-page booklet, which he recommends that the students transport to other keys. He also provides many playalong passages: piano accompaniment for the student to improvise over. On the other hand, he tends to deal rather quickly and superficially with other mainline topics, such as pentatonics and comp chords. The latter, for example, he illustrates as part of his lesson on block chords, but gives only a very meager selection of voicings in the book.

Bernhardt is at his best when he's offering an in-depth view of an approach that's an essential part of his own style—and therein lies the richness of this course, and what makes it worthwhile. For while there are very few transcribed melodic lines in the booklet, Bernhardt's playing on the tape is loaded with juicy ones, so the student need only transcribe them himself—good ear training. He also offers many of his favorite devices; for example, the use of major seventh chords around the cycle of fourths, or diminished series patterns over pedal points. Bernhardt concludes with a generous selection of his own rich and powerful compositions. By the time the student gets to them he is ready to analyse them thoroughly and use their devices in his own playing.

Like Homespun's *Dr. John* tape series, this course implicity invites the student to listen actively, to imitate the music on the tape, while using the booklet mainly as a backup, and to take the initiative in integrating the material into his own playing. The course is rich with ideas and contains many thrilling moments. Beginners will find the first two tapes very useful, and intermediate and advanced players will find the rest of the course a rich source of inspiration. But as a *total* course there's a lot missing, a lot which could have been included within its scope to make it more complete as a method.

Vinnie Martucci's subject, *Arranging And Recording Electronic Keyboards*, is much more delimited than Bernhardt's, and he covers it effectively, methodically, and with powerful musical illustrations. Along the way he offers a lot of solid music instruction, including excellent sections on comping and accompanying a singer, which could serve as a very useful supplement to Bernhardt.

Martucci's method is to present a piece-by-piece construction of a rock composition on synthesizer, examining it layer by layer, and using the discussion of each layer to talk about the general principles of that layer as well as the part he is playing for the sample piece. The beauty of it is that all you need is a four-track recorder, a synthesizer, and hopefully a drum machine to create the powerful sound he illustrates. Martucci uses a Roland JX-8P, a Yamaha DX-7, and a Casio CZ-101 as his sample axes. The listener need only own one of them, or a comparable instrument. As he goes along he offers many helpful hints about musical effectiveness, e.g., on starting a solo simply, how to make the solo stand out, how to bring the audience along with you, how to provide "things to listen to that go by in blocks," how to layer different tracks most effectively—good advice for any musician. He also points out that one of the benefits of multi-tracking is that you can try your solo many times until you get one you like on tape.

Beyond the act of recording one's compositions on the four-track deck, Martucci notes the usefulness of doing this as a mock-up for a more elaborate recording—which means saving expensive studio time. He also notes the horizon-expanding effects of recording other people's music—that of solving problems other than the ones generated by one's own compositions. And he notes the efficacy of having a standard operating procedure. Martucci concludes the series with a full-blown 24-track example of his work, showing him to be a powerful fusion artist himself.

David Cohen's audio tape course, *Blues/Rock Piano*, is a painstaking, step-by-step explanation of the traditional solo blues piano. He spells out his sample transcribed solos on the tape—just in case you barely read music—so there is an element of tedium in there for literate musicians. However, he is extremely thorough: he explains everything, and effectively covers his wisely delimited material completely. Everything is in the key of C or C minor; nothing is discussed outside of the 12-bar form, and the harmony remains completely traditional, i.e., pre-bop.

Cohen's method is to offer a series of solos, three of which he repeats, against several rhythmic backgrounds: shuffle, straight time, and New Orleans (à la Professor Longhair). Each solo illustrates a series of typical licks and melodic techniques. He also treats a simple walking bass line and the minor blues.

Not much is said about rock, despite the course title, not even how the traditional blues, which is the real subject of the course, is the basis for rock music—much less suggesting to the student how to use the course material in a more up-to-date rock context. However, ensemble playing is discussed in passing.

A spot comparison of the book and the tape immediately yielded two errors in the transcription: a misplaced eighth rest at the end of the first line of the Minor Slow Blues on page 6-3 (tape 6, page 3); and in the measure immediately following, an eighth note quadruplet is written where the conventional notation would be four 16th notes. Cohen also consistently mistakes the term *legato* for *rubato* (tape 5 side 2)—a potential source of unnecessary disputes and lost wagers.

But these are relatively minor complaints. If the student will trust his own judgment in the face of seeming contradictions between tape and text, and if he knows to apply the course material to other keys, this can be an extremely beneficial course for the beginner. It even holds points of interest for the intermediate and advanced player, since it is such a thorough introduction to the field.

My favorite part is Cohen's discussion of

CONTINUED ON PAGE 63

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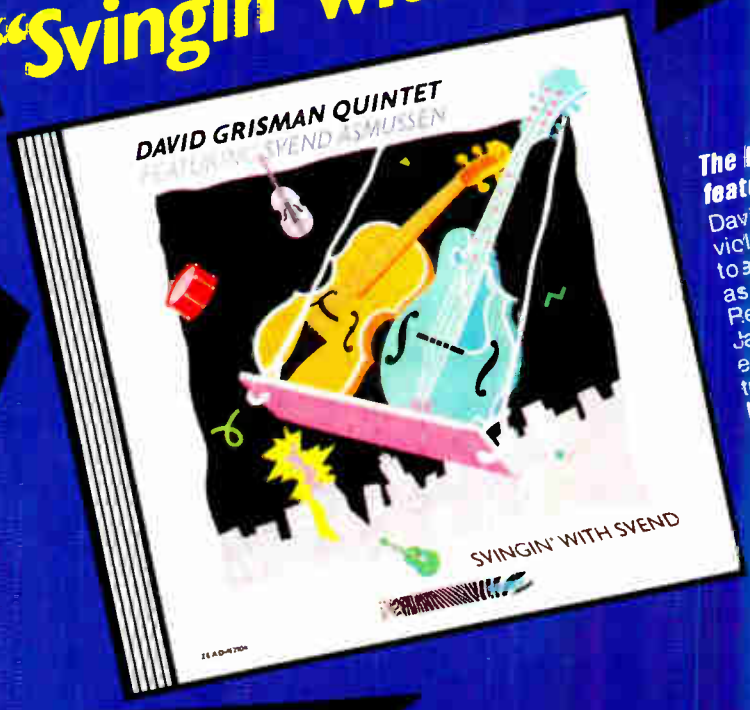

The David Grisman Quintet featuring Svend Asmussen

David Grisman teams up with Danish violin virtuoso Svend Asmussen to toast the fabulous jazz creations as penned by Fats Waller, Django Reinhardt, Duke Ellington and Milt Jackson! David, his Quintet and Svend explore the body and soul of classic tunes like "Jitterbug Waltz," "It Don't Mean a Thing," "Swing Mineur" and "The Spirit Feel." Mandolinist par excellence Grisman also contributes the title track to this half-live (from Fat Tuesdays in New York City) half-studio set and pays homage to the jazz world's most enduring compositions. "Svingin' with Svend" — a new release with an ear to tradition played from the heart! Compact disc features two bonus tracks including a rare Toots Thielemans guest spot.

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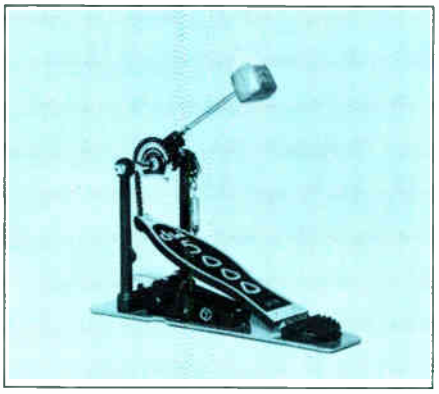
GUITAR WORLD

MARTIN'S D-62

C. F. MARTIN (Nazareth, PA) presents the D-62 Maple Dreadnought guitar. The D-62 features internal-scalloped top bracing with an "x" pattern one inch from the soundhole. This pattern, characteristic of Martin Guitars made in the early 1930's, enables players to capture an improved bass, active mid-range, and bright trebles. It also features an easy-to-play one-and-seven-eighths-inch low-profile neck with a one-and-eleven-sixteenths-inch option that allows for a quick, more comfortable feel. The D-62's appearance is enhanced by a flamed maple back and sides construction. Tortoise binding with matching pick guard and "red eye" pins add to the model's style. In addition, the D-62 is protected by a natural, high-gloss finish, with an aging toner on top.

PERCUSSION SHOP



DRUM WORKSHOP'S PEDALS

DRUM WORKSHOP INC. (Newbury Park, CA) is presenting several new acoustic and electronic drum pedals. Additions to the DW Hardware line include the 5002 "DC," a specially-priced version of the original DW 5002 Double Bass Drum Pedal with "Universal Joints;" the 5000 Turbo "E," a new acoustic/electronic hybrid pedal which utilizes a unique electro-magnetic triggering sensor in conjunction with a standard 5000 Turbo acoustic bass drum pedal; and the EP-F, a cost-effective, foot-activated mechanism that can be used to trigger electronic sounds in situations where the feel and response of a traditional bass drum pedal is not required. The 5000 Turbo "E" is shown.

WIND WAREHOUSE

IVL'S 4000 MARK II

IVL TECHNOLOGIES LTD. (Victoria, B.C.) introduces the Pitchrider 4000 Mark II Pitch-to-MIDI Interface for wind instruments. The Mark II is an improved and enhanced version of the Pitchrider 4000 which allows brass and woodwind players to use their own instrument to control the sounds of any MIDI-equipped synthesizer. The Pitchrider Mark II will dynamically track the volume of each note played, and through the use of MIDI aftertouch, breath controller, or main volume commands will allow synthesizer volume, timbre, or vibrato to be controlled by blowing harder or softer. The wind instrument played can now also play chords. An optional remote footswitch control provides hands-free control of all functions.

D'ADDARIO'S TWO NEW STRING SETS

J. D. D'ADDARIO & COMPANY INC. (East Farmingdale, NY) has announced the addition of two new models to their extensive string collection. D'Addario's Artist Relations people have worked closely with dobro player Mike Auldridge to develop their new J42 Dobro Strings. The J42 strings are made to Auldridge's specifications incorporating plain steel and phosphor wound strings. Also available is an inexpensive Classical Guitar String Set Model No. J27 which uses special Dupont nylon treble strings. The J27's are a great set for student guitars and are available with clear trebles and silver basses only.

OPTICAL MEDIA'S CD-ROM DISC

OPTICAL MEDIA INTERNATIONAL (Los Gatos, CA) is presenting a new CD-ROM disc for the Emax series of samplers by E-mu Systems. The new disc contains the equivalent of 505 floppies for the Emax with over 3,200 keyboard layouts, and will work with the existing Optical Media CDS3 CD-ROM drive. The new Emax CD-ROM's 3,200 presets will run with both the Emax and the new Emax Hard Disk sampling machines. The samples on the new CD-ROM cover the range from sound effects and percussion to orchestral strings, synthesizers, and brass. The only additional cost for an existing CDS3 user is the cost of the Emax disc, which comes with a simple ROM chip upgrade for the CD-ROM player.

ELECTRONIC GEAR

GROUP CENTRE'S WIRELESS SYSTEM

GROUP CENTRE INNOVATIONS (Calabasas, CA) has announced the U.S.A. launch of England's top-selling Guitar-Wireless System, the Trantec TG1. This FM high-frequency unit is also recommended for bass guitar. The Trantec TG1 is built with European quality and comes with a choice of five VHF channels. All units include a free padded black ABS carrying case. The hand-held and lavalier (clip-on) mic versions are also available. **db**

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TRADING FOURS AND MORE— A DISCUSSION AND TRANSCRIPTION OF CHICK COREA'S *TIME LINE*

by Robert Irving III

Robert Irving III *began his formal music training as a trombonist, baritone and french horn player. He studied arranging, composition, and theory privately, and currently serves as Musical Director and keyboardist for the Miles Davis Band.*

I can't ever remember being at a jam session where players didn't trade two- and/or four-bar phrases during the course of the set. This seems to be the highlight of any jazz performance. I was curious as to the origin of this practice, so I asked someone who would know, namely, Miles Davis. "We were the first to start doing that," stated Miles. "We did it with Sonny Rollins and Max Roach, and then with Bird . . . to keep him awake," Miles recalled with humor. It is a practice which is not used too much in contemporary electric jazz in the '80s. So it's appropriate that Chick Corea, a Miles Davis alumnus, would utilize this tradition on *Time Line* from the *Light Years* album.

If players are sensitive to each other, while trading solos, each will tend to perpetuate the rhythmic and/or melodic continuity of the phrase(s) improvised by the previous player. Thus, a musical chain of cause and effect occurs. In this way, trading solos is not a mere "firing off" in rapid succession from one's library of clichés. Rather, it is an intelligent, yet spontaneous, musical conversation. Now, this is not to say that clichés are not important in this form of improvisation. Clichés comprise a major part of all music. You can hear "familiar" phrases in classical, country, jazz, and pop music. They are the links that provide continuity to the art form as a whole. Composers are inspired by other composers. Even the creators of what we consider to be completely "original" music were inspired and influenced (even if subconsciously) by something, be it a songbird or a symphony.

To a certain extent, the size of one's vocabulary will determine how eloquent a speaker he or she is. However, it doesn't always mean the content of the speech will be meaningful. Miles often instructs soloists, "don't play a phrase if you don't mean it, because it doesn't do anything for the music . . . it doesn't mean anything to the listeners." The knowledge of scales, patterns, progressions, clichés, and the subsequent development of technique are the basic foundation of the improvisor's vocabulary. However, these elements must merge with an intangible element which I'll call *intuitive creative concept.* This element is essential if one is to make a unique improvisational comment. The development of this intuitive creative concept begins with listening . . . listening simultaneously with the outer ear and to the inner ear or "mind's ear." This inner ear is part of the creative left-brain function. It is here, in the inner ear, where inspiration and intuitive creativity are born. In contradistinction, the right-brain function is analytical and concerned with cognitive messages.

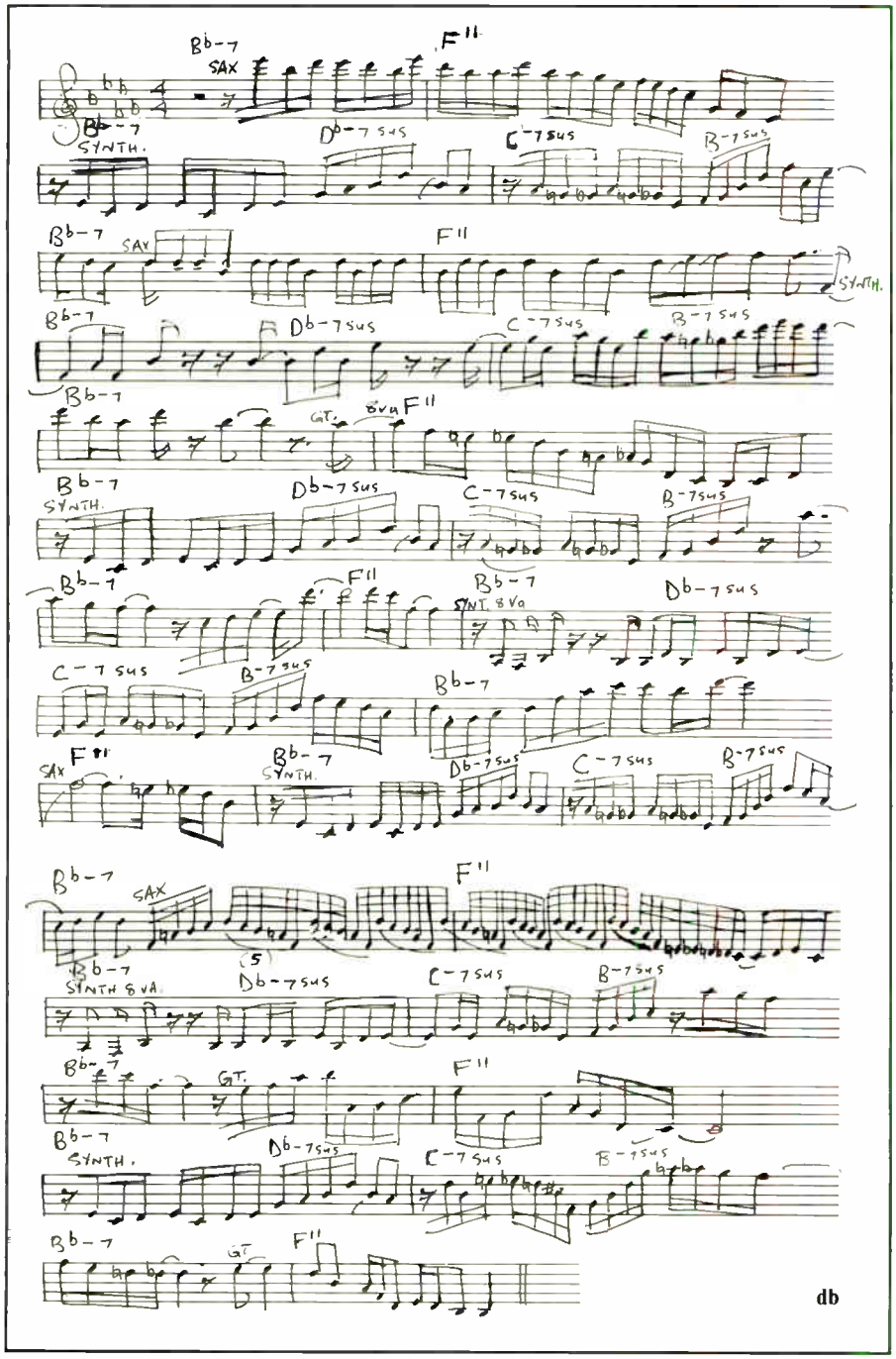
The development of the intuitive facility enables us, as improvisors, to convert abstract impressions into unique expressions. A technique taught by some vocal coaches is designed to help students execute difficult vocal passages by physically distracting the right-brain. This is done by having the student perform a task such as manipulating dice back and forth in the left hand. This task frees the intuitive left-brain, allowing a difficult vocal passage to soar with brilliance. Unfortunately, this particular technique is not practical for musicians who use both hands to play. However, it is possible to take our conscious focus away from mere dissemination of a musical library (memorized clichés, scales, etc.). In doing so, these elements are nevertheless expressed, but now as a part of the motor function. This merging of left-brain/right-brain functions gives the left-brain more freedom to disseminate ideas from an almost infinite vocabulary. The vocabulary itself is but a variation on the possibilities which exist subconsciously but are normally irretrievable by the conscious mind. As we begin to listen more with the inner ear, we learn to trust our intuition and thus create more interesting and unique solos.

At no time does this kind of spontaneity come more naturally than when soloists "trade" two's or four's. This is because there is not much time to think analytically. As we listen, the preceding soloist provides inspiration, as well as a right-brain distraction. Even now, Miles will trade two's with each soloist at the beginning of their solo. Often, I will begin by mimicking Miles' licks. Then, only the rhythmic figure with a different melody, followed by the same melody with staggered or accelerated

rhythm. After this brief interplay, Miles seems to take his cue from something I play and leaves me to my own devices. This always seems to set the course for what follows.

In *Time Line*, the saxophonist begins the improvisational trade-off. He, along with Corea and the guitarist, trade two-bar phrases over a four-bar change for 32 bars. Corea improvises alternately on two melodic patterns, as if this were part of the arrangement. These patterns serve as a thematic fiber for the other soloists to respond to. Often, the players anticipate the beginning or end of Corea's phrase and overlap certain notes.

The entire transcription is written in B♭ minor concert and has continuity even if played as a single instrument solo. **db**



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 39

Greg Osby and his imposing **Sound Theatre** group—Michele Rosewoman, piano; Kevin McNeal, guitar; Lonnie Plaxico, bass; Paul Samuels, drums—have made a better-than-good eponymous first album. Brooklynite Osby, along with Plaxico a member of Jack DeJohnette's Special Edition, plays alto and soprano saxes (the former on four songs, the other horn on three) as if he was well on his way to having a fully blossomed technique in addition to firm control of every emotion. His logic, too, is becoming superior. Furthermore, Osby's an arresting, conscientious composer who occasionally shows a genuine interest in Japanese music—witness his *Diagoro* and a traditional medley.

Michele Rosewoman's own *Quintessence* is even more of a treasure. An aggressive pianist with strong busy fingers at the service of quick, acute creative thought, she communicates assurance and ardor whether on the cutting edge of jazz or within the mainstream. Rosewoman's collection of tunes, which indicate that her assimilation of modern and post-modern jazz also applies to her writing, feature herself, altoist Coleman, alto and soprano player Osby, bassist Anthony Cox, and drummer Terri Lyne Carrington. Ah, what musicianship and moving expression. Ah, what young lions these five and the others are. Bring on the future. —*frank-john hadley*

New Releases

(Record Companies: For listing in the monthly New Releases column, send two copies of each new release to **down beat**, 222 W. Adams, Chicago, IL 60606.)

BLACK SAINT/SOUL NOTE: Mal Waldron Quintet, *The Git Go—Live At The Village Vanguard*. Tiziana Ghiglioni, *Somebody Special*, Ran Blake Quartet, *Short Life Of Barbara Monk*. Muhal Richard Abrams, *Colors In Thirty-Third*. Roscoe Mitchell Quartet, *The Flow Of Things*. Clarinet Summit, *Southern Bells*. Art Farmer/Fritz Pauer, *Azure*. Dino Betti Van Der Noot, *They Cannot Know*. Shannon Gibbons, *Shannon Gibbons*. Karl Berger/Dave Holland/Ed Blackwell, *Transit*.

SACKVILLE: Buddy Tate, *The Ballad Artistry Of. . . .* Art Hodes, *Blues In The Night*. Harold Mabern, *Joy Spring*.

FANTASY/PABLO: Hank Crawford/Jimmy McGriff, *Steppin' Up*. Oscar Peterson/Harry Edison/Eddie "Cleanhead" Vinson, *Peterson + Edison + Vinson*. Benny Carter, *Meets Oscar Peterson*.

CADENCE JAZZ: David Sidman, *Shades Of Meaning*. Jon Hazilla Trio, *Chiplacity*. Joe Locke, *Scenario*. Abdul Zahir Batin & The Notorious Ensemble, *Live At The Jazz Cultural Theater*.

MESSIDOR: Astor Piazzolla, *Tristezas De Un Doble A*. Irakere, *Misa Negra*. Arturo Sandoval, *Tumbaito*. Gonzalo Rubalcaba, *Live In Havanna Vol. 1 & Vol. 2*. Soledad Bravo, *Volando Voy*.

INDEPENDENTS: Paul Winter, *Earthbeat* (Living Music). Paul Winter & Friends, *Collection II* (Living Music). Don Slepian, *Sonic Perfume* (Audion). Mike Gallagher, *Into The Trees* (Innervision). Latitude, *40° North* (Lifestyle). David Arkenstone, *Valley In The Clouds* (Narada). Jim Bartz, *Pictures Of Earth + Space* (Audion). Talking Drums, *Some Day Catch Some Day Down* (Talking Drums). Morgan Powell, *Music For Brass* (University Brass Recordings Series).

Scott Lindenmuth Group, *Changing Rhythm* (Dark Stream). C'est What?!, *Balance* (Passport Jazz). Headless Household, *Headless Household* (Household Ink). Curtis Ohlson, *So Fast* (Intima). Greg & Bev Smith, *No Baggage* (Intima). Conveniens, *Clear* (Convenience). Cecil Gregory, *Memories Of You* (Sonus). Jo Jo Morocco, *Jo Jo Morocco* (Les Disques BR). Gordon Monahan, *Speaker Swinging* (GM).

29th Street Saxophone Quartet, *The Real Deal* (New Note). Willie Williams, *House Calls* (New Note). Rich Halley, *Cracked Sidewalks* (Avocet). Dave Storrs, *Jumper Cables* (Avocet). Meridan, *Farewell To Fortune* (Mosquito). Bill Carrothers, *The Artful Dodger* (B.C.). The Jazz Worms, *Crawling Out* (Van Buren). Juba, *Looking At The Rainbow* (JRT). Storyville Stompers Brass Band, *Be Jubilant My Feets* (Olympia). Paul Smith Trio, *Charlie Parker For Piano* (Granite). Cy Coleman, *Comin' Home* (DRG).

Herbie Mann, *Jasil Brazz* (RBI). Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen/Allan Botschinsky, *Duologue* (M.A. Music). Derek Watkins/Allan Botschinsky/Bart Van Lier/Erik Van Lier, *First Brass* (M.A. Music). Zbigniew Namyslowski, *Songs Of Innocence . . .* (Eastwind). Terry Day, *Look At Me* (Nato). Clear Sight, *Clear Sight* (Timeless Sunny). Riccardo Garzoni, *Blue Carpet* (So So). Q4, *Stepan Rasin* (Unit). Libido, *Libido* (Hot Club). **db**

MAIL ORDER SOURCES

If your local record store doesn't carry these records, try writing NMDS, 500 Broadway, NYC 10012; Daybreak Express Records, POB 250 Van Brunt Station, Brooklyn, NY 11215; Roundup Records, POB 154, N. Cambridge, MA 02140; or North Country Records, Cadence Bldg., Redwood, NY 13679.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 54

New Orleans-style rhythm. His two essential rhythmic patterns—which he combines with his set solos introduced earlier—start the student well on his way to sounding like Professor Longhair. This makes it an excellent introdution to Homespun's *Dr. John* course in New Orleans Piano. *Dr. John* is virtually non-methodical in comparison to Cohen, but he is very wide-ranging. If the student will acquire the basics through a patient study of Cohen, he'll be ready to sort through the *Dr. John* course, picking up on the cues, pointers, and sounds, transposing them and cross-applying them, to create a very complete professional, up-to-date blues style.

Cohen has also made a very useful practice tape (available separately) in which he plays on one channel with bass and drums on the other. You can play in tempo along with the band applying the course material, or you can imitate Cohen's track. Watch out, though: it's all in C.

Walter Bishop Jr.'s *Master Class* videotape covers the scope of an ideal master class: a single linear technique is explained and then applied to a generous series of playing situations on piano. The technique, simply, is the playing of the entire cycle of fourths within the space of one octave: going up two fourths then down a fifth, up a fourth, down a fifth, up two fourths, etc. It's an exciting sound by itself, and Bishop shows how to make a finger exercise and a bass ostinato out of it; how to shift back and forth between the fourth pattern, fundamentally a 12-tone sound, and the diatonic system (II-V-I progressions, rhythm changes, blues); how it integrates well with chromatics; and how it prepares the hands for fourth-based chord voicings. He illustrates each application slowly and clearly on the piano and then demonstrates it *a tempo* in the context of his compositions (lead sheets come with the tape) or in jazz standards. He proves his point early on that it is a useful device to have in one's repertoire; the challenge is to take it beyond what Bishop has done with it, to transform it in some way.

The sound and picture are clear and easy to follow. It is refreshing to be addressed as a fellow professional invited to share a personal discovery, rather than as some level of student. The only drawbacks to the tape are Bishop's long, worshipful, and rather amateurish poems about the bebop movement with which he precedes and follows the musical material. He delivers them with a straight face, in a tux with a red bow-tie. Is there such a thing as hip camp?

—joel simpson

Music Festival Calendar:
Beginning in April, **down beat** will publish a monthly schedule of upcoming music festivals. For information on how to have your festival listed, call Laura Keeler at 312-941-2030.

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auditions

down beat SPOTLIGHTS DESERVING YOUNG MUSICIANS

TERJE NYGAARD, a 19-year-old trombonist from Gjettum, Norway, is a Berklee College of Music Senior. He has recently recorded with world-renowned trombonist Phil Wilson for Norwegian Radio, and performed at various venues in Oslo with Wilson and the Sandvika Storband big band. Nygaard first appeared on Norwegian Television at age 14 as a soloist with a mainstream/swing sextet. He has also played on Norwegian Radio with his own group, The Terje Nygaard Quintet.

Nygaard is a regular performer in the prestigious concert series at Berklee, and has performed at many jazz clubs in the Boston area. He has garnered many awards, among them being named a National Collegiate Award Winner by the United States Achievement Academy, the Berklee Faculty Association Award, and the Outstanding Soloist Award from the Chapel Hill Jazz Festival. Nygaard is majoring in performance at Berklee.

ANDREW GLOWATY, 29, native Chicago trumpet player and composer, won two **down beat** deebee Awards in 1980; one for best soloist for a performance of his composition Design For Trumpet, and one with the Aeterna Brass Quintet for best chamber ensemble. He has since gone on to win several other awards and commissions, has toured with various jazz-rock and circus bands, and has performed and had pieces premiered throughout the U.S., in London, and Rome.

Glowaty recently released his first album, Inner Visions, comprised entirely of original compositions. The album contains his first symphony, Toulouse—A Symphonic Portrait. After completing graduate studies at the University of Michigan School of Music, Glowaty joined the music faculty at Slippery Rock University of Pennsylvania. As director of music technology, he installed a new MIDI electronic music studio and a computer assistance lab and began teaching classes in this area. He currently teaches trumpet, music technology/electronic music, jazz history, theory, composition, and brass ensemble at the university and continues to compose and publish newly commissioned works for traditional and electronic instruments in a style he describes as Fourth Stream Music.

MIKE FRIEND, a 29-year-old percussionist, began performing at the age of 11 with the world renown Arthur Hall Afro American Dance Ensemble in his hometown of Philadelphia, PA. He studied and performed with this ensemble until he went to Fisk University in 1976. There he performed with the jazz ensemble and appeared on their first and only live recording in '77. Friend transferred to Howard University that same year. He appeared on albums during 1983-86 with their jazz ensemble, under the direction of trumpeter Fred Irby. Also while at Howard, he performed in numerous musicals sponsored by the Howard Players. Friend is currently with several theater organizations in the Washington, D.C. area.

Since graduating from Howard University Friend has gone on to record and perform with many up-and-coming artists. He is also touring with Carroll Dashiell and the CVD Ensemble (opening act for Pieces of a Dream, Stanely Turrentine, Melba Moore, and Jerry Butler). In 1984 Friend started Phase II Entertainment, an organization which provides percussion workshops and educational performances to colleges on the East Coast.

MIKE PAGAN, 29-year-old composer/pianist from Ravenna, Ohio grew up in a musical family. His two degrees, a Bachelor of Music and a Master of Arts in composition, are both from Kent State University. A versatile keyboard improvisor, Pagan has composed and performed solo, chamber, orchestral, dance, big-band, and radio music. Awards include: First Prize, New Music For Young Ensembles Tenth Annual Composer's Competition (including a New York premiere in Carnegie Recital Hall); winner in composition, KSU Concerto Competition, Meet The Composer; and Who's Who in American Music.

Pagan has appeared in jazz clubs, radio and television broadcasts, and concerts and recitals, including performances with the Cleveland Jazz Orchestra, the Ashland Symphony Orchestra, and a year-long stint with his own jazz trio at the Akron City Club. Since 1986 he has been pursuing a doctoral degree in composition at Northwestern University, where he is the pianist for the NU Jazz Ensemble. He has appeared at many night spots in and around Chicago.

ERIC S. REED, originally from Philadelphia, is a 17-year-old pianist/composer now living in Los Angeles. He grew up playing in a church where his father was minister, leading several singing groups and singing himself. Going into his fourth year of jazz study, Reed continues to write and arrange pieces with the mentoring of Harold Battiste (upon recommendations from Wynton Marsalis) at the Community School of Performing Arts in Los Angeles. He was a first-place winner in the Charles "Dolo" Coker Scholarship Foundation Competition which awarded him $1,000. Prior to that, Reed won a scholarship for $800 from the Musician's Unioin. His next scholarship project is one for the National Association of Arts and Recognition Foundation.

Reed has performed with such jazz greats as Bennie Maupin, pianist Art Hilary, and drummer Earl Palmer. He has met Wynton Marsalis with whom he worked briefly in a workshop.

HUGH A. FRASER, 29-year-old trombonist/pianist/composer, started jazz studies as a drummer with coaching from his father in his home town, Victoria, B.C. After two years of college in Vancouver, Fraser formed the 12-piece Vancouver Ensemble and Jazz Improvisation. He has produced and recorded two albums, toured Canada yearly, and featured the 12 members with such jazz greats as Dave Liebman, Slide Hampton, and Dave Holland. The Hugh Fraser Quintet has toured Canada and Europe, and won the CBC/Alcan jazz competition in Montreal. Their first album will be released this spring before another Canadian and European tour.

Fraser has received many awards and scholarships including "Most Outstanding Band 1981" in the Canadian stage band festival, four scholarships to the Banff School of Fine Arts jazz programs, and two Canada Council Arts Grants for private study in New York City and London, England where he is currently working with Kenny Wheeler. He is currently on the faculty of The Banff School of Fine Arts Summer Jazz Program and will be a guest lecturer/performer at the Royal Academy of Music in London, England in 1988. **db**

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